Dr. *HANCOCK*'s

SERMONS

AT

Mr. *Boyle*'s Lecture, 1706.

4014.ee.22.

ARGUMENTS
To Prove the
BEING of GOD.
WITH
OBJECTIONS
Against It,
ANSWER'D.

Being Several Sermons Preach'd at the Cathedral-Church of St. *Paul*, in the Year 1706. on Account of the Lecture Founded by the Honourable *Robert Boyle*, Esq;

By *JOHN HANCOCK*, D. D. Rector of St. *Margaret's Lothbury*, *London*; and Chaplain to his Grace the Duke of *Bedford*.

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BRITISH MUSEUM

To the Most Revd Father in GOD,

THOMAS,

Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*, Primate of all *England*, and Metropolitan:

And to the Right Worshipful

Sr *Henry Ashhurst*, Bart.

Trustees for the LECTURE Founded by the Honble *Robert Boyle*, Esq;

Most Rev^d and Hon^d,

I Humbly presume to beg your Favourable Acceptance of this mean Discourse. I confess, 'tis as far below the Dignity of the Subject, as the Author (among so many Great Men that have gone before, and are likely to fol-

low after,) is below the Notice of the Publick. I can rather wiſh than hope the Performance may anſwer the Deſign of the Founder, and be no Diſparagement to the Truſtees, to the Lecture, or to my Self. With my humble Thanks for the Honour you have done me; I am,

Moſt Revd and Hond,

Your moſt Obliged Humble Sert,

JOHN HANCOCK.

THE

THE PREFACE.

I Think fit to acquaint the Reader, here are but Six of the Eight Sermons: The other Two beginning another Subject, could not properly be printed. I am ſenſible, I have Reaſon to make ſome Excuſe for the Language, which (I fear) will ſeem to ſome, leſs elaborate than it ought to be: But I hope for the Readers Pardon, tho' the Diction be ſometimes a little mean and homely, if he find it (as I believe he will) plain and intelligible. I have not troubled my ſelf with Citing many Authors, which would have ſwell'd the Bulk of the Book, without much Advantage to the Common ſort of Readers. As to thoſe whoſe Objections I anſwer, I have ſeldom cited their Words at large, much leſs (as I might eaſily have done) brought a great many Citations under each Head: My Anſwers are often ſo ſhort, it would have look'd like an Indece-

ceno-

cency to have done it. I think I have not misrepresented them in any thing: If any object this against me, I can easily do My Self Right by shewing the contrary; or Them, by owning my Mistake. I confess, I design'd to bring the Discourse into as little compass as I could, being of Opinion that few read, and fewer understand long Books: And therefore, I am not without hope this little Tract may be of some Use to those that have but little Leisure (or, it may be, less Mind) to read larger Discourses. If any despise this for its want of Learning, there are bigger Books enough on the same Subject; where they may receive full Satisfaction. Begging the Reader's Candor, as to any Imperfections, or Mistakes he may find in this little Piece, I bid him heartily farewell.

ACTS

ACTS XVII. 23. *Clauſe ult.*

Whom therefore ye ignorantly worſhip, him declare I unto you.

THE Context runs thus: Ver. 22, 23. *Then Paul ſtood in the midſt of Mars hill, and ſaid, Ye men of Athens, I perceive ye are in all things too ſuperſtitious. For paſſing by, and beholding your Devotions, I found an Altar with this Inſcription, To the unknown God. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worſhip, him declare I unto you.* Ver. 24. *God that made the world, and all things therein, he being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in Temples made with hands, neither is worſhipped with mens hands, as though he needed any thing; ſeeing he giveth to all men life and breath, and all things.*

In the Beginning of this Chapter we have an Account of St. *Paul's*

Preaching at *Theſſalonica*: And when the *Jews* there raiſed a Tumult among the People, he was forced to leave that Place, and comes to *Berea*; and by his Preaching making ſeveral Converts there, we have a great Character given of 'em, That they *were more noble than thoſe of Theſſalonica; for they received the word with all readineſs, and ſearched the Scriptures daily, whether thoſe things* that were preached by St. *Paul were ſo.*

But when the *Jews*, hearing of St. *Paul*'s preaching at *Berea*, followed him thither too, he was brought by the Brethren to *Athens*: Where he *was preſſed in Spirit* to preach the Goſpel, *when he ſaw the City wholly given to Idolatry.* And having diſputed in the Synagogue with the *Jews*, was *encounter'd* by ſome of the *Epicurean* and *Stoick* Philoſophers: And being brought to *Areopagus*, makes this Diſcourſe to theſe Learned *Athenians*, of which my Text is a part.

Ye men of Athens, &c.

Theſe Words will eaſily lead me (if Opportunity offer it ſelf) to ſpeak both of Natural and Reveal'd Religi-

on,

on, and particularly of that which is the Foundation of both, the Belief of a God. We ſee the Apoſtle does not here go about to convince 'em that there is a God: He ſuppoſes 'em, from the Univerſal Conſent of Mankind, and other Arguments that might be brought from undeniable Principles and Matters of Fact, fully convinced that there was a God.

The Fault he charges 'em with, is, That they were erroneous in their Belief of many Gods. *He was preſſed in ſpirit, when he ſaw the City wholly given up to Idolatry*; and that they were too ſuperſtitious in their Worſhip, when leſt they ſhould miſs any God, they would erect an Altar *to the Unknown God.*

But things in theſe Latter Ages (at leaſt with a great many who would be thought Men of deeper Reach and Sagacity, and of more Philoſophy than other Men), go quite otherwiſe: They are not to be charged with believing many Gods; we have Reaſon to think ſome believe none at all; are ſo far from being ſuperſtitious in their Worſhip, that they do not pretend to any ſuch thing as Worſhip of any God;

and Atheiſm is come in the room of Polytheiſm.

Before I enter upon my Proof of the Being of God, it may not be amiſs to ſay ſomething briefly of that Queſtion, Whether there ever have been ſuch Men as Atheiſts in the World?

And here I think there are Two Sorts of Men that may, not without Reaſon, be called Atheiſts.

1. There are a ſort of Ignorant, Careleſs People, that are ſo immers'd in Senſe, and whoſe Minds grovel ſo on the Duſt, and are ſo buried in the Cares and Pleaſures of the World, that they never ſo much as think of God: *God*, as the *Pſalmiſt* ſays, *is not in all their thoughts.* Such as theſe the Apoſtle ſays are *without God in the world*; Ἄθεοι ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, a kind of Atheiſts in the World.

Theſe are not the Atheiſts we are enquiring after; but, *Secondly*, Whether there ever have been, or are, any Atheiſts in Principle; that is, ſuch Men as have reaſon'd themſelves into an Opinion, That there is no God.

Some indeed have been call'd Atheiſts, that are not: ——So *Socrates*

was call'd an Atheiſt, becauſe he was againſt the Plurality of Gods. ——— So the Primitive Chriſtians were called Atheiſts, becauſe they rejected the Religion of the Heathen, and would not worſhip their Gods.

Nay indeed the moſt Atheiſtical Gentlemen of our Modern Times, are often a little ſhy of the Name of Atheiſt, becauſe in ſome Places it might happen to expoſe 'em to the Laſh of the Law. So *Vanimus* being afraid of the Inquiſition, pretended to ſubmit all his Opinions to the Judgment of the Church. We may obſerve likewiſe, the moſt Atheiſtical Writers, often in their Books, talk of God like other People, as if they believed there were one, but in other Places they ſpeak out: However they advance ſuch Principles and Aſſertions as effectually deſtroy the very Suppoſition of a God.

I ſee no Reaſon indeed why we ſhould reject the Teſtimonies of *Diogenes Laertius*, *Plutarch*, *Cicero*, and others of old, who mention ſeveral, ſuch as *Diagoras*, *Protagoras*, *&c.* that were commonly in thoſe Times reputed Atheiſts: Or of *Vanimus* and others that

confeſs there are Atheiſts now: Or why we ſhould think *Vaninus* himſelf, *Hobbs*, *Spinoſa* and others, who tho' they talk of God, yet advance ſuch Principles and Aſſertions as are utterly inconſiſtent with the Belief of a God; I ſay, why we ſhould think 'em any thing leſs than Atheiſts, is hard to imagine.

To proceed therefore to what I intend to diſcourſe on from theſe Words, that which is the Foundation of all Religion, The Exiſtence of a God.

I believe I need not tell any one what we mean by God——To wit, a moſt perfectly Wiſe and Powerful Self-exiſtent Independent Being, that is the Maker and Governor of all Things.

Now before we proceed to thoſe Reaſons that may ſerve to prove the Certainty of the Exiſtence of ſuch a Being, we muſt conſider of what kind thoſe Arguments muſt be, and whence they muſt be fetch'd, whether from Reaſon or Revelation.

And one would think this ſhould never have been a Queſtion among any that pretend to Common Senſe, when 'tis ſo plain at firſt ſight, that Revela-

tion must suppose a God, and therefore the Testimony of the Scriptures that contain that Revelation cannot properly be brought to prove it.

Indeed those Miraculous Works that attend an Extraordinary Revelation, often are, and justly may be brought to prove the Existence of God, that makes the Revelation: But to prove the Being of a God, only from the Testimony of those Books that are pretended to contain that Revelation, is only to beg the Question in dispute.

'Tis hard to give an Account why the *Socinians*, that pretend so much to Reason, that they will scarce depend upon Revelation for any thing that does not at first sight appear agreeable to their Reason, should defend such a Doctrine, That the Knowledge of God must be had only by Revelation: 'Tis much if Reason, (that they pretend to be such a Guide in Religion) should fail us in that which is the Ground of all Religion. But they pretend Scripture for it. They tell us this Knowledge is called Belief and Faith. *Heb.* 11. 6. *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is*, &c. Now Belief (say they) must be grounded on Revelation.

But the Anſwer is eaſy, That Faith or Believing, in the Language of Scripture, as well as in our Common Way of ſpeaking, does not always ſignifie Faith in the ſtricteſt Senſe, or Aſſent to ſome Truth upon Teſtimony; but Knowledge or Opinion, any kind of Aſſent, be the Ground and Reaſon of it what it will; So that this Argument ſignifies juſt nothing.

They urge again, That the Scriptures tell us, ſome Men believe no God, *Pſal.* 14. *The Fool hath ſaid in his Heart there is no God.* Which (ſay they) could not be, if Natural Reaſon could convince us there is a God.

But no-body ever ſaid Natural Reaſon would convince us there is a God, if Men will not uſe their Reaſon, and attend to thoſe Arguments that may be had from Reaſon to prove there is a God.

So that upon the whole, it remains unqueſtionable, not only that Reaſon may be ſufficient to prove the Exiſtence of a God, but that Arguments taken from that chiefly, are proper to be inſiſted on in this Matter.

From hence another Queſtion eaſily offers it ſelf to our Conſideration; Whether

Whether the Notion of God be *innate* and *inbred*, in the ſtricteſt Senſe; or whether only Man, being endued with a Faculty of Reaſoning, aſſiſted by the Notices of Senſe, and Inſtruction from others Obſervation, *&c.* comes to form ſuch Arguments as may convince him of the Exiſtence of a God? For both theſe Ways of Notice may well enough be ſignify'd by the Terms of *innate*, *inbred*, *natural* Notions of God.

I ſhould not much diſpute with thoſe that plead ſo ſtiffly for Innate or Connate Ideas, or Notions bred in us, or born with us; but yet if any think all that can truly be meant by 'em is, that Man is born with ſuch Capacities, that by degrees, and in time, upon the Information he receives from his Senſes, and Reaſoning from 'em, and the Notions he gets from Inſtruction, Education, and Converſation in the World, he comes to the Belief of a God; I cannot think they undermine the Belief of a God, or aſſert any thing dangerous to Natural or Reveal-ed Religion.

For, as far as we can tell, the Soul upon its Union with the Body, exer-

ciſes

ciſes few, if any Acts of Reaſon; or attends to any ſuppoſed Innate Notions of any thing, much leſs of God, for a conſiderable time.

Yet I would not ſay with ſome, that the Soul is a meer *Raſa Tabula*; becauſe I do not think that is a proper Metaphor in this Caſe. The Soul is an Active Principle; tho' when joined with the Body, not capable for ſome time of Exerting and Exerciſing its Reaſoning Faculties, at leaſt about very few Objects.

What Principles or Seeds of Knowledge may be Connate with us, we cannot tell. But whatever Natural Capacities there may be in the Soul, certainly a great Difference will be made by Inſtruction, Education, Converſation, the Cuſtoms of the Places where, and the Notions and Opinions of Men among whom we live: And the ſame Man brought up in *England*, would be almoſt as different from himſelf if he were brought up in *India*, as if he were another Man.

Not but that the Arguments to prove a God are ſo clear, that ſcarce any Man that attends to 'em, but muſt be convinced by 'em. But ſuppoſe

poſe a Man were born and bred in a Wilderneſs among Beaſts, without ever Converſing with Men; 'tis queſtionable, whether theſe ſuppoſed Connate Inbred Notions of a God, would ever appear and exert themſelves.

This Queſtion about Innate Ideas may be ſufficiently determined, by obſerving the Difference between the Caſe of *Adam*, who was created a Perfect Man, with Reaſon and Speech; and that of his Poſterity, who are born Infants in an imperfect State. No doubt he had Inbred Connate Ideas; for we find he at firſt underſtood the Natures of the ſeveral Beaſts, and gave Names to 'em. But whether thoſe that are born in ſuch a weak and imperfect State as all Men now are, have ſuch Connate Ideas, may juſtly be queſtion'd. However, we are willing every one ſhould enjoy his own Opinion in this Caſe.

Another thing we ſhould take notice of, before we enter upon the Proof of the Exiſtence of a God, is; Whether this Propoſition, *God is*, or *there is a God*, be ſuch a ſelf-evident Propoſition, that it needs no Proof, but the underſtanding the Terms of the Propoſition.

position. Whether, that as every one knows the Truth of this Proposition, The Whole is greater than any of its Parts, that does but know what is meant by Whole, and what by Part; so every one must see the Truth of this Proposition, *That God is*, who knows what is meant by God, and what it is to be.

But this is not a safe Way of Arguing, nor is it at all fit, to build so important a Point of Doctrine on so weak a Foundation: For if you should tell a Man he must believe this Truth, because it is self-evident; he will tell you, he doubts of it only because it does not appear self-evident to him.

No doubt this Proposition, That *God is*, or *that there is a God*, is a certain and necessary Truth; but it may not be self-evident to us, and therefore must be proved by, and deduced from other Truths that are *notiora quoad nos*, more evident to us. And therefore, notwithstanding the necessary Existence of God, that God is, and cannot but be, this Truth, that *God is*, wants to be supported by other Evidence, if we would convince any

Man

Man that pretends to deny or doubt of it.

I now come to the Conſideration of thoſe Arguments that may ſerve to Evince the Being of a God.

And here I ſhall firſt take a very ſhort Notice of Two Arguments, upon which great Streſs is laid by the Great *French* Philoſopher *Des Cartes.* And they are theſe:

Firſt, he tells us, That if we conſider well this Matter, and have a clear and diſtinct Idea of God, we ſhall find Exiſtence is an inſeparable Property of his Eſſence; and that we can no more conceive an abſolutely perfect Being (ſuch as we ſuppoſe God to be) without Exiſtence, than we can Conceive a Mountain without a Valley, or a Triangle that has not its Three Angles equal to two Right ones.

But if we conſider, that Exiſtence is as neceſſary to the Actual Perfection of any other Being, as it is to that of God; and the Ideal Perfection (from which that Philoſopher argues) of any Being, may be conceived without it.

When we might have the ſame Notion of a Mountain or Triangle, tho' there were no ſuch things in Being.

When

When all the Philoſophy in the World has diſtinguiſh'd between the Eſſence and Exiſtence of Things; or if you will, between their Ideal and their Actual Exiſtence.

When it will be harder to prove in the way that Philoſopher takes, that Exiſtence pertains to the Eſſence of God, than it is another way that God does actually Exiſt.

When if we grant that Philoſopher, that actual Exiſtence muſt be imply'd in the Notion of an abſolutely perfect Being, ſuch as we ſuppoſe God to be; yet the Queſtion will ſtill return, Whether there be any ſuch abſolutely perfect Being in the World? And ſo we are but juſt where we were before.

When a Man that has a mind to be an Atheiſt, will certainly tell him, That becauſe he has formed, as he thinks, a clear and diſtinct Idea of an abſolutely perfect Being, whoſe Eſſence is Exiſtence, it does not really follow there is ſuch a Being in the World; and that he only ſuppoſes and begs the thing in Queſtion.

And when whatever ſome nice Speculators, and Men of Metaphyſical Heads, may make of the Argument,

to

to confirm themſelves in the Belief of a God, yet as it will never convince an Atheiſt, ſo it will not be underſtood by, nor is it fit to be propoſed to, the generality of Men.

Being theſe things, I think, are ſo, I do not think it ſafe to inſiſt upon this nice Argument, in the Caſe before us.

I know there have been a great many Learned Men, and great Philoſophers, that have ſtoutly defended the Argument; and I ſuppoſe have made it clear to themſelves, tho' I believe they will find it hard to do it to ſome other People.

Another Argument that Philoſopher makes uſe of, to prove the Exiſtence of a God, is from the clear and diſtinct Idea of God, that is Born with us, Bred in us, or Imprinted on our Souls.

'Tis impoſſible, ſays that Philoſopher, we ſhould have ſuch clear and diſtinct Ideas, but from ſome Being that has all the Perfections contain'd in thoſe Ideas; that is, from God; and conſequently we may infer from ſuch Ideas, that there is a God.

But

But this Argument I doubt, is worſe than the other; for 'tis plainly in our Power to form Ideas of Beings more perfect than our ſelves, yea of an abſolutely Perfect Being.

And though we ſhould not ſuppoſe ſuch Notions or Ideas of God imprinted on our Natures, yet we ſee by Experience we can from Inſtitution, Converſation with other Men, Obſervation of the Creatures, form ſuch Notions of God.

So, though when we do believe a God, and are rightly inform'd of our Dependance upon him, as to the Frame of our Natures, we may believe ſuch clear and diſtinct Ideas of himſelf were woven by him in the Frame of our Natures (though that, as I have ſhew'd before, is a Queſtion); -- yet ſure if a Man had no Knowledge or Belief of the Exiſtence of a God, he would never conclude, that becauſe he finds in his Mind a clear Idea of an abſolutely perfect Being, therefore there is ſuch a Being: And that only becauſe if it were not from that Being, he could have no ſuch Ideas, when he plainly finds in himſelf a Power of Forming ſuch Ideas.

I would

I would be far from running down any Argument that might be of any Service against the Atheists; or from thinking that Great Man that used these Arguments, design'd to betray the Cause, &c. But it looks a little odd, that that Philosopher should insist on these, and lay so much Weight upon them, when he passes by all the common and long-received Arguments to prove the Existence of a God.

I now come to those Arguments I shall insist upon for the Proof of this Truth.

And, by way of Preparation for our better Reception of those Rational Arguments that do directly prove the Being of a God, I shall in the first place insist upon that which is commonly brought, from the universal Consent of Mankind in this Matter.

And here we may, in the first place, consider the Matter of Fact; whether the Consent of Mankind in the Belief of this Truth, be so general and universal as is pretended.

It hath been generally taken for granted, that there was no Nation so barbarous, but we might find some

Footsteps of their Belief and Worship of a God. And it is certainly true of all the more Civilized Nations, that were formerly known to the more Learned Parts of the World.

But since Navigation was improved, and many Discoveries have been made of several People that were unknown before, some have pretended to find some Exceptions from this General Rule.

And indeed some Travellers give us a dismal Account of those People that live about the *Cape of Good Hope*, in *New Holland*, and some other formerly unknown Parts of the World.

But as to these pretended Exceptions from the universal Consent of Mankind in the Belief of a God, we may consider,

1. That 'tis possible those that assert those things may not have well enquired into the Matter, or have sufficiently informed themselves.

'Tis plain, those that by accident light upon such barbarous Countries, can take but a transient View of any of the Customs of such Countries, much less of their Religion, or their Notions of a God; whereas if they had

had lived among 'em, and had more Opportunity of Converſing with 'em, they might have found Reaſon to give another Account of them.

2. Accordingly, in ſome Inſtances we find, that later and more full Diſcoveries have given another kind of Account of ſome of thoſe Barbarous People.

3. That moſt of thoſe People that are pretended to Believe no God, and to have no Religion, appear ſo very Unciviliz'd, that they are little better than Brutes: And 'tis no great Wonder, if thoſe that are fallen ſo far below the common Pitch of Human Nature in all other Things, ſhould proportionably ſink below it in their Senſe of Religion, and Belief of a God.

4. If we ſhould grant there may, in the more Barbarous and Unciviliz'd Parts of the World, be ſome People that own no God this is no juſt Exception to the general Conſent of Mankind in this Matter.

We believe there are ſome Philoſophical Atheiſts; Does it therefore follow, that Atheiſm cannot be diſproved by true and ſound Philoſophy?

The *Pyrronian* Sect of Philoſophers were Scepticks, and deny'd there was any Certainty of any thing in the World: Does it therefore follow, that Mankind muſt not generally believe their Senſes and their Reaſon too, in the plaineſt Inſtances of Senſe and Reaſon? Some Men are born Monſters: Does this prove Human Nature to be a Monſtrous Thing?

5. 'Tis very poſſible, thoſe Nations that are ſaid to be Exceptions to the univerſal Conſent of Mankind in this Matter, may Believe a God, and yet have no Rites of Publick Worſhip, and ſo be thought not to own a God.

So that upon the whole, it is poſſible thoſe pretended Inſtances of ſome People that Believe no God, may not be true; or if any of 'em be ſo, there is no great Reaſon they ſhould be thought to ſignify much by way of Exception to this Univerſal Conſent of Mankind as to the Belief of a God.

Having thus far conſider'd, how Matter of Fact ſtands, as to the Univerſal Conſent of Mankind in the Belief of a God, I ſhall now, as to the Va-

Validity of this Argument, propoſe theſe Things to your Conſideration.

1. That the Ancient *Roman* and *Greek* Writers inſiſt much upon this Argument, to prove the Being of a God. Paſſages to this Purpoſe are ſo numerous, and ſo common in Authors, that 'tis needleſs to cite 'em.

2. Whatever Original we aſſign to this general Conſent of Mankind in the Belief of this Truth, it will ſtill add to the Force of the Argument.

If we ſuppoſe with ſome, it comes from a kind of a Natural Inſtinct that the Notion of God is imprinted upon, and woven into our very Natures: This ſhews, how natural the Belief of God is to Mankind; and that they can ſcarce be thought Men, that have caſt off this Belief.

If we ſuppoſe with others, this general Belief comes from the Common Obſervation that all the World do and may make of the Excellency and Beauty of the Creatures, and thereby learn to know God as the Creator: This plainly ſhews how Cogent thoſe Arguments are, that are taken from the

Works of God, to prove his Being, when all the World agrees in 'em.

Or whether we ſuppoſe this Belief to come by Tradition from ſome common Parent of Mankind; this makes it very probable, that that Common Parent of Mankind was Created and Inſtructed by God.

So that which Way ſoever we ſuppoſe this Belief of a God came to be ſo common in the World, ſtill it adds Strength to the Argument, and makes it of greater Force to prove the Exiſtence of God.

3. Indeed ſo General and almoſt an Univerſal Conſent of Mankind in this Truth, is it ſelf of great Weight and Moment, to confirm our Belief of the Truth of it.

We uſe to argue ſo in other Things. What ſeems true to ſome Wiſe Men, ſeems ſomewhat probable: What ſeems true to moſt or all Wiſe Men, is very probable: What moſt Men, both wiſe and unwiſe, aſſent unto, doth ſtill look more likely to be true. But what all Men generally conſent in, hath the higheſt Probability, and comes ſo near Demonſtration, that it may paſs for ridiculous Arrogance and Self-conceit,

ceit, to deny the Truth of it.

How ridiculous did *Anaxagoras* make himſelf, when he denied Snow was White?——— *Zeno*, when he ſaid Motion is impoſſible?——— *Heraclitus*, that Contradictory Propoſitions might be both True? And *Epicurus* little leſs than they, when he pretended the World was made by Chance? And they upon the ſame account are little leſs than Ridiculous, that deny there is a God, as going contrary to the general Suffrage and univerſal Conſent of Mankind; and ſaying in effect all the World are Fools but themſelves.

But the Atheiſt endeavours to invalidate this Argument Two ways.

1. By giving a parallel Inſtance of a falſe Opinion that has been received with almoſt as general a Conſent as that of the Exiſtence of God.

2. By pretending to give an Account how this Opinion of the Exiſtence of God might come to be ſo common, without ſuppoſing the Truth of it.

1. The Atheiſt tells us, that this general and almoſt univerſal Conſent of Mankind concerning the Exiſtence of God, is no more an Argument of the

Truth of it, than the like almoſt general Conſent as to Polytheiſm, is an Argument that there are more gods than one.

But as to this we may conſider,

1. That the wiſeſt and beſt in all Ages diſſented from the Multitude in that point.

2. That even among the generality of the groſſeſt Idolaters, and in the worſt times of Polytheiſm, the general Opinion was, That there was one Chief and Supreme God, that had Abſolute Power over the other gods, as well as Men; ſo that it ſeems probable, that at leaſt thoſe of the Heathen Idolaters that conſider'd any thing, looked upon the other gods to be but an inferior ſort of Beings, a ſort of *Semidei*, Mediators between God and Men, and to whom, by the Will of the Supreme God, ſome kind of Worſhip was due: As the *Romaniſts* now do their Saints, the Worſhip of which, they pretend ultimately terminates in God himſelf.

And I think *Tertullian* or St. *Cyprian* ſomewhere obſerve, (and upbraid the Heathen with it) That it was common with them in their ordinary Diſcourſe, to ſpeak of God in the Singu-

lar

lar Number; which was an Evidence Reaſon taught them to believe there was but One that was truly God.

3. This ſeems rather an Argument that there is a God, that the generality of the World ſhould be ſo fond of the Belief of a God, as to run out into ſo much Superſtition in the Worſhip of him. So the Worſhip of ſo many falſe gods rather ſhows there is a true One. —— As Counterfeits infer a real Thing.

4. That which moſt of all alters the Caſe as to the Belief of One God, and the Belief of many gods, is this; that as to the One there is all the Reaſon in the World for it; and as to the other, that of Polytheiſm, there is all the Reaſon in the World againſt it.

But there are ſeveral ways the Atheiſt pretends to tell us how this Notion of a God might become ſo Univerſal. As

1. From Ignorance of Second Cauſes. —— When any extraordinary Events happen either good or bad, Ignorant Men, ſay they, are apt to attribute 'em to inviſible Powers, and to intereſt God in 'em.

But

But if this were all, how come the wiſe as well as the unwiſe, the greateſt Philoſophers as well as the meaneſt Mechanicks, to Believe a God?

'Tis indeed quite contrary; it's generally Men's Ignorance of, or at leaſt their not rightly conſidering of, and arguing from Second Cauſes, that is the cauſe of Atheiſm: For Second Cauſes, if conſider'd right, naturally lead us to the Firſt Cauſe, that is, God.

2. The Atheiſt tells us, the Notion of God might come from Tradition.

This makes againſt the Atheiſt, for it is impoſſible there ſhould be any ſuch univerſal Tradition, unleſs we ſuppoſe all the World to come from one firſt common Parent, who probably was made by God, and delivered down the Belief of a God to all his Poſterity.

3. The Atheiſt tells us, this univerſal Conſent of Mankind in the Belief of a God, might come from an extravagant Fear, and ſo be only a Sign of the extream Weakneſs and Frailty of Human Nature.

But this is a meer Pretence.

If

If theſe ſuppoſed Fears proceeded from without, 'tis the ſame with Tradition; if from within, 'tis probably from Conviction of a God.

'Tis much more reaſonable to believe Men's Fears proceeded from a juſt and well-grounded Belief of a God, than that their Belief of a God ſhould come from an uncertain Jealouſy and a groundleſs Fear of they know not what.

Spinoſa indeed ſays, *That Fear is the Cauſe of all Religion.* So it is indeed, if we mean a juſt and reaſonable Fear of God. But 'tis a ſilly thing to ſuppoſe that Religion took its Riſe from a general and groundleſs Fear of Men knew not what.

We find, for all theſe Men's Pretences, that moſt Men are not very apt to thoſe groundleſs Fears; for notwithſtanding Men are fully perſuaded there is a God, and that 'tis a fooliſh and dangerous thing to neglect their Duty to him, yet they are too apt to forget themſelves, and to put far from them the Fear of God.

But how comes this Fear of a God to be ſo univerſal over all the World; the greateſt Princes, the wiſeſt Stateſmen,

men, the moſt Learned Philoſophers, the moſt Valiant Captains? Are all theſe a Pack of Fools? Yet we find ſuch as theſe are no leſs ſubject to theſe Fears of God than other Men.

Nay, even theſe Atheiſts themſelves, while they pretend to be above the Belief of a God, yet cannot wholly free themſelves from the Fear of him; and their Hearts give their Tongues the lie: And therefore we find, ſome of our Modern Atheiſts (as is ſaid of *Hobbs*) durſt ſcarce be alone by themſelves.

One would think, if it were as theſe Men pretend, thoſe ſhould be moſt in fear, that know moſt of God, and are oftenеſt thinking of him: But we find the contrary, Atheiſtical Perſons are moſt diſturbed with them, even while they do what they can, *that God* may not be *in all their Thoughts.*

'Tis a vain Pretence therefore that this univerſal Conſent of Mankind in the Belief of a God, can proceed from I know not what Fear of Inviſible Powers.

4. The Atheiſt pretends, this univerſal Conſent of Men in the Belief of a God,

God, might proceed from the Designs of Crafty Politicians, who to make the People more submissive to Government, began and propagated the Belief of a God.

But this, if we consider it well, will appear to be as groundless a Surmise as any of the other.

It's strange, if this were so, we have no Account in History who was the first Inventor of the Belief of a God.

'Tis common enough for Princes and Politicians to make use of Mens Fiery Zeal and Bigotry, or to encourage some particular Sect of Religion, to serve their own Ends: But they are not often known to be the Inventors of a New Religion, much less can they be supposed the first Authors of that Belief which is the Ground of all Religion.

We find all the Lawgivers that History informs us of, suppose this Belief of a God, and take it for granted as that which had long since taken root in the Hearts of Men, and was carried by the Vogue of the World.

This

This Suggeſtion ſeems to ſuppoſe that all Mankind were ſometime or other under one Government, elſe no one Prince would attempt it, nor could any great number of 'em agree to undertake it.

Theſe Atheiſtical Men we have now to deal with, ſay, 'Tis impoſſible we ſhould have any Notion of a God: If this be ſo, thoſe Politicians that ſhould go about to impoſe this Belief of a God upon the World, would have an hard task to beat it into the Heads of Mankind.

In ſhort, the very Suppoſition is abſurd in it ſelf: For if the Belief of a God had not been grounded before in the Reaſon of Mankind, no Prince or Politician would attempt to poſſeſs the World with ſuch a Notion: Nor could all the Princes and Politicians in the World, if they could join together, by all their Power and Cunning, bring the Belief of a God to be ſo univerſal as it is.

Having thus ſpoken of the Argument to prove the Being of a God, taken from the general Conſent of Mankind, I ſhall now proceed to inſiſt upon ſome other Arguments to prove the ſame.

And

And for ſome Reaſons I ſhall produce the chief Arguments I intend to inſiſt on for the proof of this Truth, without giving a particular Anſwer to all thoſe Objections that are commonly made againſt 'em, by the Defenders of Atheiſm; and ſhall reſerve a more full Anſwer to thoſe Objections till afterwards.

And here, in the firſt place, the Atheiſt muſt needs grant that ſomething has exiſted from all Eternity. If he will grant that there is any thing that now is, he muſt grant that ſomething always has been.

There is nothing in the World clearer than this, That nothing can come out of nothing, without ſome Cauſe beſides it ſelf; for then the ſame thing muſt be both before and after it ſelf; muſt at the ſame time be, as a Cauſe, and yet not be, as an Effect: That is, be, and not be, at the ſame time; which is a flat Contradiction.

Now ſince 'tis ſo plain that ſomething is eternal, and this Self-exiſtence, or Eternal Exiſtence is certainly a Perfection; ſure 'tis much more reaſonable to believe it to belong to ſuch a Perfect Being as we ſuppoſe God to be, than

than to ſuch a dull unactive thing as Matter is; which yet the Atheiſts believe to be eternal.

I dare not indeed rely too much upon that Argument the *Carteſians* take from the Notion they have of Self-exiſtence, or Neceſſary or Eternal Exiſtence, being implied in the very Idea of God; becauſe I am afraid the Atheiſt will ſay, they beg the Queſtion.

But methinks when we are ſure that ſomething muſt have been from Eternity, or elſe nothing could now be; and the Atheiſt himſelf believes Matter to have been ſo; it is much more reaſonable to believe that this Perfection of Self-exiſtence, or Neceſſary or Eternal Exiſtence, ſhould belong to ſuch a Perfect Being as we ſuppoſe God to be, than to ſuch a dull ſtupid ſenſeleſs thing as we find Matter to be; and conſequently, that there muſt be a God.

And thus I have ſpoke briefly of the firſt Argument I think fit to inſiſt on, for the Proof of this Truth, That there is a God.

2. Another Argument may be taken from the impoſſibility there is, that there

there ſhould be an infinite Succeſſion of Cauſes and Effects.

As, for inſtance, in the Generations of Mankind, we muſt at laſt come to a Man that was not generated.

Now as to theſe firſt Parents of Mankind, we muſt either ſuppoſe they were from Eternity, which I believe none will think, that conſiders the frail Condition of Human Nature in the State it is now in:

Or we muſt ſay, as ſome of the Atheiſts too boldly aſſert, That Men ſometime or other ſprang out of the Earth, like Muſhrooms in a Night. And if ſo, 'tis ſtrange the Earth has ſo long ago loſt its Virtue, that no ſuch Things ſhould be known or heard of now for ſo many Thouſand Years.

Or we muſt ſay, That theſe firſt Parents were made by ſome Superior and Powerful Being; and that is him we call God.

3. 'Tis plain, the Scripture ſends us to the Works of God, to learn his Exiſtence. *Rom.* 1. 21. *For the inviſible things of him are clearly ſeen, being underſtood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead.* Pſal. 19. 1, 2. *The Heavens declare the*

Glory of God, and the Firmament ſheweth his handy-work.

Indeed, there is no Account to be given, how ſuch a Glorious and Regular Frame of Things, as the World that is now before us, ſhould come to be, without ſuppoſing a God; that is, an infinitely Wiſe and Powerful Being, that was the Great and Wiſe Creator, and is the Governor of it.

Tully ſomewhere ſpeaks of this Matter, to this Purpoſe. Says he, If any of us ſhould come into a great Houſe, every way exactly contrived for Uſe and Ornament, and ſhould find there no Inhabitants, nothing but Rats or Mice, or ſome ſuch mean Creatures; Should we think that the ſeveral Parts of that Houſe jumbled together by Chance? Or were contrived and made by thoſe deſpicable Creatures? Or that it never was built at all, but had been for ever? No certainly, we ſhould rather conclude, that it was ſome wiſe Architect, (tho we ſaw him not, nor knew who he was,) that was the Builder of ſuch an Houſe.

So the Caſe is here: We ſee before our Eyes a moſt Noble Fabrick and

Frame of Things. We find no Being, that we know any thing of, that can make ſo much as one Pile of Graſs, nor an Hair of our Heads, nor the meaneſt Creature that creeps upon the Earth. Shall we think this Noble Frame was never made? Or that it was made by a Caſual Jumblement of Atoms? No; 'tis much more rational to conclude, there is One Intelligent, Wiſe, and Powerful Being, that was the Maker of it; and this Being we call God.

To inſtance particularly in Two Parts of this Noble Frame; the Heavenly Bodies; and the Bodies of Animals, and particularly that of Man here on Earth.

1. The Heavenly Bodies. Not to enquire into the Nature of thoſe Bodies which we know little of, more than that probably the Sun is a Vaſt Ball or Globe of a Fiery Nature; for we ſee Fire on Earth caſts forth both Light and Heat: And that the reſt of the Planets are Solid Opake Bodies, ſomething like that Earth on which we live. I ſay, not to enquire into this, the very Motions of the Heavenly Bodies, which we are by Expe-

rience plainly assur'd of, are so stupendous and wonderful, as may well convince us, that there is some infinitely Wise and Powerful Being, that was the Cause, and is the Director of 'em.

'Tis much the same thing in this Case, whether with the Old Philosophy we suppose the Earth to be the Center; or with the New Philosophy, we make the Sun to be the Center of this Orb in which we live; and all the Planets, and our Earth among the rest, to move round about it. I say, this is all one; their Motions are so wonderful, as may convince us there is a God.

That so many Vast Bodies, some of 'em so many times bigger than this our Earth, swimming only in Liquid Air or *Æther*, should yet so exactly keep their Places and Distances from their Centre, perform their Motions round the Centre of their Orb or *Vortex* in so exact a Space of Time, and at the same time many of 'em move round their own Centres. That these Stupendous Motions should be so regularly continued, without any considerable Variation, for so many Thou-

sand

ſand Years; is ſuch a Wonder of Nature, as may force any Man to believe there is a God.

To give any tolerable Account of the Reaſon of this, has non-plus'd all the Ancient and Modern Philoſophers.

The Aſtronomers, by long and many Obſervations, may attain to a pretty accurate Knowledge of their ſeveral Periodical Revolutions: But when they pretend to dive into the Original Cauſe of theſe Wonderful Motions; by what Internal Principle, or by what External Force they were begun, or are carried on for ſo many Thouſand Years; they are at a Loſs what Account to give of it. They tell us indeed of Gravitation, and Attraction, of *Vis Centripeta's*, and ſuch fine Words; but they leave us as much in the dark as we were before. And they had e'en as good plainly confeſs they know nothing of the Matter; and ſpend the Time they uſe to employ in enquiring into the Reaſon of 'em, in admiring and adoring that infinitely Powerful Being that is the Cauſe of 'em.

For my part, if any one should tell me of a Cannon that would throw a Ball to the *West-Indies*, or of a Globe that with one Turn of a Man's Hand would turn round its Center for an Hundred Years together; I should think it much more easy to give a Philosophical Account of it, than it is to give any Account of the Heavenly Motions, without supposing something above the Power of Matter, or the Common Laws of Motion we can observe in this Lower World.

Another Instance of the Works of Nature I chuse to insist upon, is, the Bodies of Animals here on Earth, and particularly that of Man. Well might the Psalmist cry out, (*Psal.* 139.) *I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

If we consider how wonderfully these our Bodies are conceived and nourished in the Womb, that so many Parts of such different Contexture and Solidity, should grow, and that so regularly, from a little Moisture. That when we are Born, the Parts of our Bodies should be ordinarily so exactly Uniform, and fitted for the Use and Convenience of the Body. That Monstrous Bodies should be so rare as they are.

If

If we consider the vast Variety of the Parts and Humours in the Body: The Veins and Arteries, the Nerves and Ligaments, the Flesh and Bones; How exactly the several Parts are suited to the Uses of the Body, either for Receiving in its Aliment, Concocting and Distributing of it; or for Voiding its Superfluities and Excrementitious Juices.

And particularly, if we consider the *Crasis* and Circulation of the Blood, which is the Life of the Animal. That the Blood should receive Nutrimental Particles from such a vast Variety of Aliment; and continue for so many Years in so exact a *Crasis* and Temper, as to be fit to Circulate through so many little Passages, particularly in the Extream Parts of the Body.

Nay, indeed, the Circulation it self of the Blood through the Body, is the greatest Wonder of all. 'Tis a kind of perpetual Motion in the Body. The best Anatomist or Natural Philosopher in the World, cannot give any tolerable Account how this Circulation is begun, or carried on, or what is the true Principle or Cause of

it. As for Instance, Whether the Motion and Expansion of the Blood, do first cause the *Diastole*, or Opening Motion of the Heart; or whether the *Systole*, or Contracting Motion of the Heart, do originally cause the Progressive Motion of the Blood?

In a Word; The whole Oeconomy of the Animal is so Wonderful, that *Galen* himself could not forbear, upon the Contemplation thereof, to break out into the Praises of God, the Creator of it.

I might here say something of that more Noble Part of Man, his Soul; which as it could not Exist of it self, so certainly, if we regard those Noble Faculties of Understanding, Willing, Remembring, Chusing, Refusing, Self-moving, Contemplating, and Considering Things that are above Matter, and depend not on it; cannot come from any merely Material Cause, And which, as it is a Proof and Evidence, so it is a near Resemblance of such a perfectly Wise and Good Being as God is. But of this I shall have a fitter Occasion to speak, among the Objections that are made against the Being of a God.

4. Ano-

4. Another Argument we may uſe, to prove the Being of a God, may be taken from the Regularity of the Acting even of Inanimate Creatures, in order to the Accompliſhing of thoſe Ends for which they were deſigned by Nature.

We may lay down this for a Rule, That whatever acts conſtantly, and regularly, and certainly, in order to ſome End; either muſt underſtand and deſign that End it ſelf, or be guided and directed by ſome other Being that does ſo.

Now if we look upon the ſeveral Creatures, even thoſe that have no Life, Senſe, or Underſtanding, and ſee how regularly they are directed in their Motions and Actions; it will make us, whether we will or no, own and believe an infinitely Wiſe and Powerful Being, that does either immediately it ſelf direct thoſe their Motions, or has fixt ſuch an Order of Nature, that they cannot vary from it.

Thus, if we conſider how regularly Heavy Things deſcend; the Plants grow according to their ſeveral Kinds; Animals are begotten, brought forth, and grow up; the Heavenly Bodies

are

are conſtantly and regularly moved, while they know nothing of the matter.

If we think that even thoſe Creatures, that have not only Life, but Reaſon and Underſtanding, yet in thoſe Actions that belong to Vegetative Nature, act without Counſel or Deſign: The Mother does not conſult, how the Child ſhall grow in her Womb. We eat our Meat, and conſider (it may be) ſo far as to chuſe Things we think wholeſome; but after that, we take no further Care, but leave Nature to do its Work. We Plant Flowers, or Trees, but leave the Earth to nouriſh them. And all theſe Works are done as certainly and regularly, as if we our ſelves had the doing of them. If we conſider theſe things, we ſhall eaſily think there is a God.

But ſome one may ſay, Nature does this.

What do they mean by Nature? If they mean the particular Nature of every Individual Thing, 'tis no more than to ſay, Such things are done, tho' we know not how, or by whom: Which is in effect to ſay nothing.

If

If they mean Common Nature, abſtract from Individuals; that is but a Logical Notion, and can do nothing.

If they mean by Nature, any Active Principle, diſtinct from the Things themſelves; it muſt be either ſuch a particular Plaſtick Nature, as ſome ſuppoſe to be in every Individual thing, and that is an Active Principle in the Formation of it, tho' it have it ſelf no Senſe or Underſtanding.

Now, it may juſtly be queſtion'd, Whether there be any ſuch Nature: tho' ſome great Philoſophers do aſſert it: Or, if there be, they that aſſert it, make it to depend on God.

If they mean by Nature, any Active Intelligent Principle, that ſo certainly and regularly guides theſe Inanimate Creatures; then by Nature they mean God; and ſo before they are aware, confeſs there is a God.

However, the thing is clear, that 'tis utterly impoſſible that ſo vaſt a Variety of Creatures as we here ſee in the Univerſe, that have no Life, Senſe, or Underſtanding, ſhould go on ſo regularly as they do, without the Guidance and Direction of ſome Superior

perior Intelligent Mind and Being, such as we suppose God to be.

And thus the Regular Acting of Inanimate Things, in order to those Ends for which they seem so well to be design'd, is a plain Proof of an infinitely Wise and Powerful Being, that is, of a God.

Indeed, we cannot much wonder the *Epicureans* of old banish'd all Final Causes out of Philosophy; and tell us, Those Aptitudes that are in the several Creatures, or in the several Parts of any of 'em, for such and such Uses, were found out afterwards.

For certainly, these Final Causes do not well agree with their Doctrine, of Blind Chance being the Cause of this Regular Frame of the Creation.

Nor need we any more wonder, that *Spinosa* ridicules 'em, and tells us, That Nature proposes no End to it self; and that all Final Causes are but *Humana Figmenta*, the Fictions of Men.

For these agree no better with that no less Blind Necessity he sets up for his God, when he says, that *ex necessitate divinæ Naturæ, infinita infinitis modis sequi debent*: *An infinite Number of Things, by*

by no leſs infinite Ways, muſt follow from the abſolute Neceſſity of the Divine Nature. Which *Hypotheſis*, (when he makes the Univerſe to be his God) as I ſhall ſhew hereafter, is but another Name for the *Epicurean* Chance.

Nay, *Carteſius* himſelf, being too much addicted to his Mechanick Principles, tells us, It is not for us to gueſs for what End God made ſuch and ſuch Things thus or thus; and that we are not able to judge of the Deſigns of God.

We confeſs we are not able to dive into the Abyſs of Divine Providence, nor to make an adequate Eſtimate of all the Wiſe Ends of God in his Works: But there are many Things that are ſo obvious, that he that runs may read 'em.

Can any one think, (to inſtance in our own Bodies) that the Eyes were not made for the uſe of Seeing; the Ears, of Hearing; the Mouth, to receive Aliment; the Teeth, to chew it; the Stomach, to digeſt it; the Bones and Sinews, for Strength; the Joints, for Bending; and the Muſcles, for the Motions of the Body? And can we not plainly ſee the Uſe

and

and End of these; tho' we do not know so exactly the End and Use of all the Parts and Humours of the Body?

The *Epicurean* will tell us very wisely, no doubt, that all these came by Chance; and that their Use was found out afterwards, I suppose, by Chance too.

And 'twas very easy to do it; for we find, even Children themselves find the Use of these Things as soon as they are born.

Well! even these *Epicureans*, or Fatalists themselves, if they will think a little, must own, these and such like Things would not have been made otherwise, and could not have been made better, if the Highest Wisdom had been concern'd in the making of 'em: And therefore, that they are very absurd, to ascribe those things to Blind Chance, or Necessity, in which so plainly appears the Footsteps of the Greatest Wisdom, and which are so plain a Proof of a God.

Another Argument we may make use of, to prove the Being of a God, is, The Excellent Harmony there is found in the several Parts of the Creation.

And

And this may be consider'd Two Ways.

1. With respect to the greater or less Perfection of those Creatures that are visible to us.

2. With respect to the Subserviency of the less Noble to the more Noble Creatures.

1. With respect to the Perfection of those several Sorts of Beings that are visible to us.

Some there are that are without any Power so much as of Vegetation, or Propagation of their Kind. Others there are, that are endued with a Power of Vegetation, that are propagated from Seeds according to their Kind, that grow, and live, and dye. A Third sort, are, Animals that have a Life of Sense, if not (as 'tis probable) some Degree of Reason too, in their Sphere.

But there are yet a more Noble sort of Animals we call Men, that have not only Sense, and some low Degree of Reason, but such Noble Faculties as enable them to understand Things that are above the Reach of Sense.

I would

I would not drive any Argument further than it will eaſily go; but methinks this plain *Climax* in the Creatures that are viſible to us, can ſcarce chuſe but lead a conſidering Man to believe there are a Higher ſort of Rational Beings that depend leſs on Matter, and are not ſo clogg'd and preſs'd down with it, as theſe Rational Natures in Mankind ſeem to be. And conſequently, that we muſt at laſt come to ſome One moſt perfectly Rational, Intelligent, and Wiſe Being, that is the Cauſe and Original of all Things.

A Second Thing, in which this Excellent Harmony of the Creatures appears, is, in the Subſerviency that the leſs Noble have to the more Noble Creatures.

Thoſe that want Life are ſubſervient to thoſe that have it. If we look up to Heaven, the Heavenly Bodies do not ſhine only for themſelves, but by their Benign Influence do aſſiſt the Vegetation and Growth of Plants and Animals on Earth. If we look down on Earth, the Earth, by the Heat and Moiſture that comes from the Heavens, brings forth Graſs and

Plants; those feed and nouriſh the Brutes; and both they, and Herbs and Plants, are uſeful unto Men.

So that here ſeems to be plain Footſteps of the Wiſdom of a God, who hath made ſuch ample Proviſion for all his Creatures, and particularly for that Noble Creature Man, that he might devote himſelf to the Service of him that made him.

But here we have ſome ſo abſurd, as not only to deny, but even to ridicule this Order and Harmony of the Creatures, and the Subſerviency of one Part of the Creation to another.

This *Spinoſa* plainly does, in the firſt Part of his Ethics *de Deo*, and founds it all in Imagination.

I know not whether it be fit to diſpute with, or poſſible to convince Men that will advance ſuch abſurd Aſſertions.

However, we cannot much wonder he ſhould do it; for any thing that looks like Wiſdom and Deſign in the Frame of the World, muſt deſtroy his abſurd *Hypotheſis*, of God's being a *Neceſſary Agent*.

But ſome tell us, 'tis not likely that ſuch vaſt Heavenly Bodies were made to ſerve ſo vile and mean a Creature as Man is.

But to this it's eaſily anſwer'd;

That Man, nay the meaneſt Animal may, for any thing we know, be a more Noble Creature than the Sun it ſelf: Inaſmuch as the meaneſt Creature, that has Life, and Senſe, is and muſt be more Noble than the greateſt that is deſtitute of them.

However, 'tis plain to Experience, that the Sun it ſelf is ſubſervient, not only to the Vegetation of theſe our Bodies, and thoſe of the Inferior Animals, but even of the Plants themſelves; even of the meaneſt Seeds or Grains that are caſt into the Earth.

What other Ends and Uſes there may be of thoſe Heavenly Bodies, beſides their illuſtrating the Glory of their Creator, we cannot tell: But I think we may well argue from the Harmony of the Creation, and the Subſerviency of the leſs Noble to the more Excellent and Noble Creatures, that there is an infinitely Wiſe Being, that is the Author of 'em.

Ano-

Another Argument to prove there is a God, may be taken from Natural Conſcience.

Rom. 2. *The Gentiles*, ſays the Apoſtle, *who have not the Law, are a Law unto themſelves; which ſhew the Work of the Law written in their hearts, their Conſcience bearing witneſs*, &c.

Now 'tis plain, that Conſcience of Duty and Obligation, muſt imply a Reſpect to ſome Law, either Natural or Poſitive; and a Law muſt ſuppoſe a Lawgiver.

Since all Men then have a Senſe of Duty and Obligation, this muſt ſuppoſe a Natural Conviction, either impreſſed upon their Natures, or gathered by Rational Collection, that there is a God.

That there is generally more or leſs ſuch a Senſe in Mankind, appears, in that their Heart ſmites 'em, not only for thoſe Faults that are open to the View of Men, or may expoſe 'em to the Penalties of Human Laws, but for the moſt Secret Miſcarriages of their Lives.

But ſome may ſay, This only argues, they have through Prejudice, or upon Miſtake, entertain'd an Opinion

there is a God; which will have (as to Matter of Conſcience) the ſame Effects as if there really were one.

To this I anſwer, There is a mighty difference between this, and the Caſe of a Superſtitious or prejudiced Religioniſt: For the one, when he is convinced (as he often is) of his Miſtake and Folly, will be eaſy and quiet.

But here we find theſe Things very plain.

That the greateſt Scoffers at Religion, ſuch as the *Roman* Emperors *Tiberius* and *Caligula*, have not been proof againſt the Pangs of Conſcience, and their guilty Fears. That thoſe that have ſtudiouſly made it their Buſineſs to diſengage themſelves from all Senſe of Duty, have not been able to do it; but ever and anon theſe Natural Sentiments would return upon them.

And further, thoſe that have pretended upon Philoſophical Principles to have already done it, as to the Stings of Natural Conſcience, and the guilty Fears that iſſue from it, have been juſt like, if not worſe than other Men.

So

So that it's plain, the Notions of a God are either ſo firmly imprinted upon, and ſo throughly rooted in the Nature of Man; or at leaſt by a neceſſary and unavoidable Reaſoning from the Works of God to his Exiſtence, do ſo ſtare 'em in the face; that they cannot eaſily be obliterated, but convince Men whether they will or no, that there is a God.

But indeed, if we conſider this Matter well, we ſhall find there cannot be any ſuch thing as Conſcience, nor any juſt Ground for a Senſe of any moral Obligations, without the Suppoſal of a God.

Some may tell us, it may be, that theſe Obligations may ariſe from the Nature, Reaſon, and ſeveral Relations of Perſons and Things, antecedently to our ſuppoſing 'em agreeable to the Will of God.

But this, tho' it may found a Fitneſs and Agreeableneſs of Virtue to the Nature of Things, yet it is far from ſuperinducing any Obligation, and laying a Foundation for Natural Conſcience.

We may ſee then what Friends the Atheiſts are to Civil Society, and how much they conſult the Good of Mankind, when they aſſert that which in the true Conſequence of it, looſes the very Bonds of Duty, and ſets every one at liberty to do what they liſt, to injure and wrong their Neighbours as they pleaſe.

No doubt there does appear a General Fitneſs and Agreeableneſs in Virtuous Actions; and it would be an honourable and a generous Thing, ſo far to conſult the General Good of Mankind, as to practiſe accordingly: But alas! how weak an Incitement will this Point of Honour be to Virtue and Juſtice, without the Belief of a God.

The Atheiſt is ſo ſenſible that what I now aſſert is a juſt Conſequence, that he is not aſhamed boldly to aſſert, That there is (antecedent to Human Laws) no real Difference between Good and Evil, no moral Obligation.

Mr. *Hobbs* tells us over and over, That there is nothing ſimply or abſolutely Good or Evil; nothing in its own Nature Juſt or Unjuſt. That

Good

Good and Evil are only Names that ſignify our Appetites and Averſions. *Spinoſa* has ſeveral Paſſages exactly to the ſame Purpoſe. And Mr. *Blount* tells us, The Virtues that Men extol ſo highly, are not of equal Weight and Value in the Balance of Nature.

I am not very careful in Citing what they ſay, for it will be hard to abuſe 'em in this Caſe, by ſaying worſe Things than are to be found in their Writings.

But, by thoſe Gentlemens Leave, they herein contradict the General Senſe of Mankind.

For tho' there may be ſome Difference in the Sentiments of Men in ſtating ſome nicer Caſes in Practical Things; yet in the greater Lines of Duty, all Mankind agree. Who ever thought it was all one, Whether we Worſhip God, or Blaſpheme him? Or, if this be not a proper Inſtance for the Atheiſt, who pretends to think there is no God; we may ask him, Is it all one, to Honour our Parents, or to Affront 'em? to Love and Oblige our Neighbour, or to Kill him? to be Merciful, or Cruel? to be Kind to our Brother, or Rob and Spoil him?

Is there no Obligation as to any of these Things, but what comes from Human Laws?

Indeed, if these Vices were establish'd by never so many Human Laws, would that make 'em Just and Reasonable?

But these Atheists think they solve the Matter, by telling us, That 'tis necessary Men should, for Peace and mutual Security, enter into Civil Society, and make mutual Contracts; and that superinduces an Obligation to Justice and Virtue.

Well, if it be necessary that these Things should be secured by Civil Contracts, sure there must be an antecedent Obligation to 'em: And if they be so necessary to the Good of Mankind, that Publick Peace cannot be maintain'd without 'em, 'tis a Sign they were Good in themselves before.

But we may ask these Men, How it comes to pass, that there lies such an Obligation upon Men to keep their Contracts when they are made?

It seems we must suppose there is something Good and Evil in it self: 'Tis not all one, to keep our Contracts,

tracts, or to break 'em. And why may not all the other greater Inſtances of Virtue be as good as this?

Or what Reaſon can be given, why we ſhould be more obliged to this, than any of the other?

The Truth is, unleſs we ſuppoſe what the Atheiſt pretends to deny, a God, our moſt ſolemn Engagements and Contracts will ſignify but little; and when we think it our Intereſt to do it, we may as eaſily break 'em, as make 'em.

The Sum is, Virtue, Juſtice, *&c.* moral Good and Evil, is founded in the Nature and Reaſon of Things; and iſſues from thoſe Relations we ſtand in to God and one another. We may be ſure, if there be, as we believe there is, a Juſt and Holy God, that did Make, and does Govern the World, 'tis agreeable to his Will, that his Rational Creatures ſhould govern themſelves according to the Eternal Rules of Reaſon. And, I think, we may ſafely aſſert, That thoſe Rules that Eſtabliſh the greater Inſtances of Virtue and Morality, are as plain, clear, and undoubtedly certain, as any Principles in Philoſophy, or any Propoſitions

poſitions in Mathematicks can be. And therefore the Atheiſt, (let him talk what he will of the Obligation of Human Laws, and of keeping Contracts) he really diſſolves the very Bonds of Civil Society, turns the World into a Foreſt of Wild Beaſts, and is a Publick Enemy to Mankind.

Another Argument that may be brought to prove the Being of a God, are ſome extraordinary *Phœnomena* that prove there are Inviſible Beings, whoſe Power exceeds what we can obſerve of the Ordinary Courſe of Nature.

Such are theſe that follow; Apparitions, Witches, Demoniacks, Prodigies and Prophecies.

Theſe, I confeſs, do not directly and fully prove the Being of a God: Becauſe they may more immediately ſometimes proceed from Beings, (tho' of greater Power than Men, yet) in Power inferior to the Supreme God.

If we can convince the Atheiſt, that there is an Inviſible World, a World of Spirits, of Beings Superior to Man, and that do not depend on Matter; he will be almoſt forced to acknowledge One Supreme, Independent,

dent, Omnipotent Spirit, that is the Maker and Governor of that Invisible World. If we can thus take the Outworks, the Fortress in which he defends himself will not hold out long.

The Atheist seems well aware of this, for he starts at the very Mention of any of these extraordinary *Phœnamena*, and musters up all his Forces to attack the first Appearance of any such Things.

And I confess, I cannot look upon any one Thing as a surer Sign that the Age we live in hath a Tangue of Atheism, than the so common Disbelief of such extraordinary Occurrences as are above the Power of Visible Nature.

But above all, I cannot but wonder at those that pretend to believe the Scriptures, by which all these Things are plainly asserted, and yet generally ridicule and run 'em down.

It cannot be deny'd, there are many false and feigned Stories of such Things; and therefore it well becomes Wise and Prudent Men, not to be too hasty in Believing 'em.

But it does not therefore follow, but there may be such Proof, and (no doubt)

doubt) ſometimes is ſo, as may and ought to ſatisfy a wiſe and cautious Man of the Truth of ſome Matters of Fact of this Nature.

A Man would not preſently conclude, becauſe there are a great many Cheats that pretend fair, therefore there is no Truth among Mankind. Or, becauſe there are a great many Fables interſpers'd in Hiſtory, that all Hiſtory is fabulous. Or, that becauſe there is a great deal of Bad Money, that there is none Good. Neither would one conclude, that becauſe ſome People have been deceived by a weak and fearful Imagination, and ſome others have impos'd upon the World out of Deſign; that therefore the wiſeſt, and moſt curious and conſiderate Men, that have ſometimes pretended have received full Satisfaction as to theſe Things, have either themſelves been deluded, or deſigned to impoſe upon Mankind.

But to ſpeak more particularly as to Apparitions. We have ſo many Inſtances of 'em in Holy Scripture; (and we hope the Atheiſt himſelf will at leaſt allow that to be as credible as other Hiſtories:) Almoſt all Hiſtorians

ans ſo abound with 'em, and we have ſo many authentick and well-atteſted Inſtances of 'em in modern Times; that I think it is very abſurd and unreaſonable, wholly to deny, or ſuſpect the Truth of 'em.

Nor is it neceſſary that we ſhould be able, or fit we ſhould be required to give an account of all the Difficulties that occur about 'em. As for inſtance, whether Apparitions (ſuppoſing ſome of 'em to be true) be the Spirits of Men departed, or any other Spirit. For what End and Deſign God may permit 'em to appear; whether upon any particular Reaſons that might concern them or their Relations in this Life. What Power they have of aſſuming Bodies, whether Real or only Appearances; and of what Nature thoſe ſuppoſed Bodies are; how they put 'em on, and what becomes of 'em when put off, whether they are condenſed Vehicles, or of any other Nature: Theſe and many other curious Queſtions, we are not bound or able to anſwer.

We know ſo little of that intermediate State of Souls departed, that we cannot pretend to ſay much about it.

This

This indeed we believe, that there is no occaſion for ſuch Apparitions now, either to make any new, or to confirm the old Revelation. *We have Moſes and the Prophets*; a Revelation well atteſted and confirmed already; and *they that will not hear them, neither will they be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead.*

But yet we cannot ſay, but there may be occaſion, (ſo far as God ſees fit) by ſome ſuch extraordinary Occurrences, to convince a Sceptical and Infidel Age, that there are inviſible Powers, when they are ſo commonly deny'd and run down, by many that would be thought to have more Wiſdom and Philoſophy than the reſt of Mankind.

For my part, I cannot ſee why thoſe that believe there ever were Apparitions, (as thoſe that believe the Scriptures muſt) ſhould deny there are any ſuch now? Or why the Atheiſt, that pretends to build all Knowledge upon Senſe, ſhould deny ſuch ſenſible Appearances, (if well and ſufficiently atteſted) unleſs he will leave Mankind no Knowledge at all.

As to that Queſtion, Whether there be any ſuch thing as Witches or Wizards; that is, Perſons that deal with the Devil, or have Familiar Spirits, I think there is no great Reaſon wholly to doubt of it.

I know the Common People are too forward in their Cenſures as to this Matter; and 'tis like, many may have been thought to be ſuch, that are not; and 'tis not unlikely ſome may have been condemned by Raſh Judges, or Ignorant Juries, without any juſt Occaſion.

But ſtill I think, when Scripture is ſo clear in the Point, when there are ſo many Authentick Hiſtories of Perſons that have been ſo accounted, even by the wiſe and ſober part of Mankind, and that have confeſs'd themſelves to be ſo, I think it is abſurd wholly to deny it.

As to Scripture, I confeſs we are told the Word in the Original ſignifies Poyſoners; and ſuppoſe it be ſo, that will not do the buſineſs: For what ſhall we ſay to thoſe Scriptures that mention thoſe that have Familiar Spirits? What ſhall we ſay to the Witch of *Endor*, conſulted by King *Saul*?

where we have an Inſtance of a Witch and an Apparition together. For whatever Spirit it was that appeared, an Apparition there was, and raiſed by a Witch; which is enough to our Purpoſe.

But it may be the Atheiſt will laugh at Scripture Hiſtory; let him then enquire impartially into Matter of Fact, and I believe he will find Authentick Hiſtories of thoſe that have been counted even by the diſcreet and ſober part of Mankind, Witches, that have by the Power of Evil Spirits done things above the ordinary Power of Nature.

As to the Queſtion, Whether there be any Demoniacks or no? the Scripture, ſo far as we will believe that, is clear in the Matter; We read *our Saviour caſt out many Devils, and ſuffer'd them not to ſpeak, becauſe they knew him.*

'Tis ſaid indeed by ſome Writers, that this was a Common Form of Speech uſed by the *Jews* of that time, for thoſe that were diſtemper'd in their Bodies. But beſides that Scripture is clear againſt it, *Joſephus* himſelf aſſures us, the *Jews* were of another Opinion.

And

And many Inſtances we find recorded by the moſt Learned Phyſicians, ſuch as *Sennertus*, *Fernelius*, and Others; of Perſons, that after all the beſt Judgment they could make, and Means they could uſe, they could not but judge to be poſſeſs'd by Evil Spirits.

Now when ſuch Perſons do not only diſcover Secrets, and declare Things paſt, but future alſo, and beſides this, ſpeak in Languages they had never learnt; we cannot think ſuch to be mere Madmen, but rather that they are poſſeſs'd by Evil Spirits.

I confeſs, the *Roman* Church (tho' perhaps they may afford us ſome Inſtances of Perſons too well acquainted with Evil Spirits; and ſome of their Pretended Saints have not without ſome Reaſon been ſuſpected;) yet they have ſo tired the World with their Apparitions of Saints, and their pretended Demoniacks, that perhaps that has not been the leaſt Occaſion of the Scepticiſm of the preſent Age as to theſe Things; nothing being more common than for Men to run from one Extreme to another, from groſs Superſtition to open Infidelity.

Well, upon the whole, I think there is no Reaſon we ſhould deny there have been, and ſometimes ſtill are Apparitions of Good or Evil Spirits; or that there are ſuch Perſons as we call Witches, Wizards, Magicians, or Conjurers, that deal with Evil Spirits, or Demoniacks that are poſſeſs'd by 'em.

And ſo far as there is Evidence enough to ſatisfy any Rational Man from theſe extraordinary Appearances, that there are Inviſible Powers, we may be well prepared for, and ſtrongly inclined to the Belief of God.

And particularly; As, if there be Good Spirits that are the Guardians of Mankind, it ſeems very probable that they were made by, and depend upon, and do Service to One Infinite, Eternal, Good Spirit: So on the other hand, if there be a great Number of Evil and Malicious Spirits, of ſo great Power and Might, 'twill be hard to ſuppoſe they ſhould not do more Miſchief in the World, but that there is an infinitely Wiſe, Good, and Powerful Spirit, that ſuperintends the Affairs of the World, ſets Bounds to the Power and Malice of ſuch Evil Spirits,

rits, and without whoſe Permiſſion they can do nothing.

I now come to ſpeak ſomething of Prodigies and Prophecies, but eſpecially of thoſe real and unqueſtionable Miracles recorded in the Holy Scriptures, done by *Moſes* and the Prophets, and by our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, and his Apoſtles.

As to Prodigies; That ſuch Wonderful Works have often happen'd in the World, as are above (what we can obſerve of) the ordinary Courſe of Nature, and muſt be attributed to ſome Inviſible Powers of greater Might than any Agents we are acquainted with; we have the Concurrent Teſtimony of the beſt Heathen Authors. To aſſert theſe to be wholly fabulous, is little leſs than to call in queſtion the Verity and Authority of all Hiſtory.

Now theſe, as I ſaid before, (at leaſt many of them) do not directly prove a God; but they are a certain and undeniable Proof of ſuch Inviſible Powers, the Acknowledgment of which will naturally lead to the Belief of a God.

Another Thing fit to be inſiſted on in this Caſe, is, Prophecy. We find by Experience, that the Wiſeſt Men, aſſiſted by the Power and Sagacity of mere Nature, cannot certainly tell us what will be on the Morrow.

When we find therefore ſuch Predictions made by any Men as come to paſs, we may well conclude they were aſſiſted by ſome extraordinary Inſpiration, or Revelation.

The Heathen Writers, and particularly *Cicero*, argue thus: *Si eſt Divinatio, ſunt Dii*; If there be any ſuch thing as Divination, or Foretelling future Things, there muſt be Gods.

Now, of thoſe Things that are told before they come to paſs, there are Two ſorts.

1. Such as are foretold but a little before, and whoſe immediate Cauſes are then in being.

And theſe (we can eaſily believe) may be foretold by the Natural Sagacity, or Knowledge, of Finite Spirits, whether good or bad.

For they, ſo far as God permits, by their Inviſibility and Agility, may be privy to the Deſigns of Rational and Free Agents, and may know Things that

that happen in far distant Places, or are design'd by the most Close Politicians; and so be capable of Foretelling Things beyond the Reach of the Wisest Men.

And this Kind of Prophecy is at least, as I said before, an Evidence of Invisible Rational Powers; the Extent of whose Knowledge far exceeds that of Mankind, and so may lead us a good way towards the Belief of One Infinitely Wise and Intelligent Spirit, that is, God.

Or, 2. The Things foretold may be such as are to come to pass in far distant Ages to come: And, as far as we believe any such Prophecies made and fulfilled, so far we must be convinced that there is a God.

For we cannot easily believe, any Finite Limited Spirit, can by any Natural Sagacity foretell Things to come to pass, at the distance of some Hundreds or Thousands of Years.

Now, not to mention the Pretences made by prophane Histories to some such Things, we that are Christians firmly believe, that there have been Men endued with such a Prophetick Spirit. Witness the Prophecies record-

ed in Scripture of the *Meſſias*, nay that of *Daniel* concerning the Succeſſion of the Four Great Empires, ſo clear and plain, (as to ſome Things at leaſt,) that ſome of the Ancient Writers againſt the Chriſtians not being able to deny it, have been ſo bold as to pretend, they muſt be written after the Things were come to paſs.

Now I take ſuch Prophecies as theſe, to be a moſt irrefragable Witneſs of the Being of God; it being utterly impoſſible that any Man, or indeed any Finite Spirit, ſhould foretell Things at ſuch a diſtance, without ſome ſpecial Revelation from ſuch an Infinite and Omniſcient Being as we ſuppoſe God to be.

As to thoſe true and proper Miracles that have been (if we believe our Religion) done by *Moſes* and the Prophets of old, and by our Saviour and his Apoſtles under the Goſpel-Diſpenſation; as they are certain Proofs of the Truth of our Religion, ſo they at the ſame time prove the Being of a God.

For whatſoever extraordinary Work proves the Truth of a Revelation from God, muſt at the ſame time

prove

prove the Being of that God whoſe Revelation it is.

Of theſe there are Two ſorts.

1. Such Works as are above the Power and ordinary Courſe of Nature, tho' not above the Power of ſome Inviſible Spirits, of greater Might than Mankind. Now theſe at leaſt prove (as I have ſaid before) an Inviſible World of Spirits, and ſo lead us to the Belief of a God.

Or, 2. They are ſuch Works as are above the Reach of any Creature, and ſo are proper only to God: And theſe are a direct and full Proof of the Being of a God.

Some (it may be) here may ask, Why Miracles are ceaſed, and are not wrought now as well as formerly, to confirm our Belief of a God?

To which I anſwer; That 'tis hard to ſay, whether they be totally ceaſed, or no.

But if they be ſo, 'tis becauſe the Chriſtian Revelation is ſufficiently confirmed already, ſo that there is no Occaſion for the Continuance of this Miraculous Power in the Church, for the Confirmation of the Truth of our Religion.

And as to the Belief of a God, the Exiſtence and Attributes of God are ſo plain from his Works, that we need not any further Confirmation of the Truth of 'em.

However, ſo far as Miracles may be looked on as a Proof of a God, thoſe that have been already wrought are a ſufficient Evidence of this Truth.

I might here inſiſt on ſome other Metaphyſical Arguments to prove the Being of God, and which may have (if well conſider'd) ſome Weight in 'em: But becauſe it is my Deſign, as near as I can, to propoſe only ſuch Arguments, and in ſuch a way too, as may be obvious to the Underſtanding of all, I ſhall omit them, and proceed now to conſider the Objections that are made by the Atheiſts againſt the Being of a God.

And I ſhall chuſe to rank thoſe Objections that are advanc'd by the Atheiſts, under the ſeveral Heads of the Attributes that thoſe that Believe a God uſually aſcribe to him, and to which they ſeem moſt directly to be oppoſed.

And here in the first place, the Atheist is so bold as to assert, That we have no Idea of God at all. That the Word *God* is only an empty Sound, a Name that signifies nothing, a Word that has no Idea belongs to it.

This Bold Assertion is no less than an open Affront to the common Sense and Experience of Mankind.

For do we not find, that the Generality of Mankind have some such Notion of God as this, That he is a Being of Absolute Perfection, or a Being of the most Perfect Power, Knowledge, and Goodness? Or (if you will) yet more explicitly, A most Perfect Understanding, Being or Mind, existing himself from Eternity, and the Cause of all other Things: That he is himself Independent; that all Things else depend on him.

Is not this a sufficiently clear and plain Idea of God?

Do not we find by Experience, that there are Words in all Languages to signify such a Being? And that tho' those Words many times differ in Sound, as much as any one Word can well differ from another; yet the Idea and Notion they are apply'd to

signi-

ſignify, is very much the ſame all over the World.

Nay, the Atheiſt himſelf cannot deny, that he has at leaſt ſome ſuch Notion of a God; elſe how comes he to deny there is any ſuch Thing?

For the Argument returns upon himſelf; and as he objects againſt the Theiſts, that when they talk of, and aſſert a God, they aſſert they know not what; ſo 'tis no leſs true, that when the Atheiſt denies a God, if he have no Notion at all what is meant by the Word God, he denies he knows not what.

For certainly, 'tis as neceſſary to have ſome Notion of a Thing to the denying, as well as to the aſſerting the Exiſtence of it.

Nay indeed, the Atheiſt in this Point confutes himſelf: For one Account he gives of the Opinion that there is a God, is a certain feigning Power in the Mind of Man, whereby it can by compounding and dividing its own Ideas, form a Notion or Conception of Things impoſſible, of Things that neither were, are, nor ever will be.

Now

Now he himſelf muſt grant, there is in the Mind of Man a Power at leaſt of forming an Idea of ſuch a Being as we call God, as well as other Things; and therefore it muſt be a wild Aſſertion to ſay, we can have no Idea of God.

But I have ſpent too much time on ſo extravagant a Notion.

The Atheiſt inſiſts further on another Argument much of the like Nature; and that is, what the Theiſts ſay and confeſs of God, That he is Incomprehenſible; and ſo according to his wiſe Way of Reaſoning, muſt be nothing.

To which I anſwer;

1. There is a great difference between Apprehenſion and Comprehenſion; between any Thing's being inconceivable, and incomprehenſible; between knowing nothing of a Thing, and knowing all that is to be known of it.

We ſhould count that Man very abſurd that would aſſert, a good Anatomiſt knows nothing of the Body of Man, becauſe he cannot exactly tell the Ends and Uſes of every minute

Part

Part of it. Or, of a Scholar, that he knows nothing of Natural Philoſophy, becauſe there are ſome *Phænomena* that baffle the beſt Philoſophers. Or, of a Seaman, that he knows nothing of the Sea, becauſe in ſome Places he cannot fathom the Depth of it.

'Tis true, we have no juſt and adequate Notion or Idea of the Eſſence of God; but we do and may clearly know many of his Attributes, at leaſt that ſuch Attributes do and muſt belong to ſuch a Perfect Being.

2. 'Tis one thing to know the Exiſtence, and another to know the Eſſence of Things.

Muſt we conclude we our ſelves have no Bodies, becauſe we do not exactly comprehend the whole Oeconomy of an Animal? Or that we have no Souls, becauſe we cannot diſcover the Naked Eſſence of a Spirit, nor how it is and can be vitally united to the Body? Or that we do not ſee and hear, taſte and ſmell; becauſe we cannot tell what it is in theſe External Objects that affects our Senſes, or how they do it?

So

So in the Caſe before us, we have ſuch weighty Arguments to prove the Being of a God, as may convince any Man that is not an obſtinate Sceptick, and ſuch as muſt prevail with us, tho' we knew much leſs of the Attributes of God than really we do.

This Truth, That there is a God, ſhines upon us from the Creatures like the Sun in the Firmament; but as if we gaze too much on that Glorious Luminary with our Bodily Eyes, we ſhall be ſo far from ſeeing into its Nature, that our Eyes may be dazzled, and we may loſe our Sight by looking on it:

So here, tho' as the Apoſtle ſays, *Rom.* 1. The *eternal Power and Godhead* of the Divine Nature, *be clearly ſeen by the things that are made*; yet we muſt not pretend to look too wiſhly upon that Glory, leſt we become vain in our Imaginations, and our Minds be ſtruck blind with the Luſtre of it.

God is not Inconceivable, tho' he be Incomprehenſible: We may know that he is, tho' we ſhould not know what he is: We may know ſomething of him, tho' far from all that is to be known: We may be aſſured of many

of

of his Attributes and Properties, tho' we cannot have any adequate Notion of his Eſſence: We may know enough of thoſe Attributes, if not to gratify our Curioſity, yet to ground our Worſhip and Obedience.

3. 'Tis not to be expected we ſhould comprehend the Eſſence of God, when perhaps we do not perfectly underſtand the Eſſence of any thing in the whole World.

We have a great many ſorts of material Objects daily before our Eyes, and we are apt to fancy we know a great deal of 'em; but 'tis in a great meaſure Prejudice, and we take things upon Truſt, without a due and thorough Examination of the Grounds and Meaſures of our pretended Knowledge.

We hear and ſee, and taſte and ſmell, we reaſon and diſcourſe, we move and walk; and perhaps all this while, if we are put to it, cannot give any tolerable Account how we do ſo, nor of the true Reaſon how and why we move ſo much as one of our Fingers.

And ſhall we think to ſearch into the Depths of the Divine Nature, or muſt we not believe there is a God, unleſs we can do ſo? The

The Atheiſt makes a mighty Noiſe againſt Spirits, Immaterial and Incorporeal Beings, as unintelligible things. But will he pretend to tell us exactly wherein the Eſſence of Matter, his darling Deity, conſiſts?

One calls it Extenſion, a Property that, for ought any one knows, belongs to empty Space as well as Body. Another calls it reſiſting Bulk, or impenetrable Subſtance; but this ſeems to be only with reſpect to it ſelf: There may for ought we know, be a great many ſorts of Beings, that may penetrate the bulk of Matter.

The truth is, we are deceived by the Appearances that Matter makes to our Senſes, into a fond Opinion that we know a great deal of it, when perhaps we may know as little of the true Eſſence of Body, as we do of Spirit.

There is no Reaſon therefore the Atheiſt ſhould argue againſt the Being of God, becauſe we own him to be Incomprehenſible.

Another Attribute, or rather Mode of the Attributes of God, is that of Infinity.

This

This the Atheiſt quarrels with, and tells us, The word Infinite ſignifies nothing in that which is ſo called; that he that calls any thing Infinite, does but attribute an unintelligible Name to a no leſs unintelligible Thing.

But if we conſider what is truly meant by Infinite, when apply'd to God, we ſhall find neither the Name nor Thing is truly unintelligible.

Now there's a Negative and Poſitive Infinity.

A Negative Infinity.

So we ſay Number is Infinite, becauſe whatever Number we ſuppoſe, we may by adding more Units make it greater. So we may ſay Matter is Infinite, becauſe ſuppoſe what extent we will of it, we may yet add to it, and ſuppoſe a greater. So Time is Infinite, becauſe if we ſuppoſe any definite Number of Years paſt, we may yet ſuppoſe more; or if we ſuppoſe Millions of Ages to come, we may yet ſuppoſe more to ſucceed 'em.

There is likewiſe a Poſitive Infinity, and this we apply to God.

By which we do not mean, that God is every thing that is or can be, for then every thing would be God,

or

or at leaſt a Part or Property of him; which ſeems to be ſomething like *Spinoſa's* Notion of God.

For God (if I may ſo ſpeak) tho' Infinite, is at it were limited and bounded by the Perfection of his Nature. He that ſhould ſay God were a Body, would derogate from his Excellency and Perfection.

Nor when we call God Infinite, do we mean that every thing we attribute to God, is to be aſcribed to him in the higheſt degree that can be ſuppoſed; but in ſuch a degree, as is conſiſtent with the trueſt and higheſt Perfection.

Thus when we ſay, God is Infinite in Mercy; we mean only ſuch a degree of Mercy, as is conſiſtent with the Perfection of God, as he is a Juſt Governour. For, as Juſtice without the Mixture of Mercy would be ſevere Tyranny, ſo Mercy without Juſtice would be Folly.

Thus, when we ſay, God is Infinite in Power; we mean only, that God can do every thing that is poſſible and fit to be done; every thing that does not imply a Contradiction to the Truth of Things, or to the Ex-

cellency and Rectitude of his Nature and Will.

So that we ſee, the Attributes of God are as it were bounded and limited by one another; and the Excellency of the Divine Nature is chiefly ſeen, in the Glorious Harmony that may be obſerved among them.

'Tis eaſy to ſee from what I have laid down, what is the true Notion of Infinite, when we apply it to God.

'Tis neither more nor leſs than abſolute Perfection. When we ſay, God is Infinite in Power, we mean Perfect in Power; that he can do all Things that are poſſible and fit to be done: And ſo of the reſt.

So that tho' (at firſt ſight) this Term of *Infinite* may ſeem a little dark and intricate; yet, if we attend to the true Senſe and Meaning of it, it will appear eaſy and obvious to the meaneſt Underſtanding.

But becauſe this Term of Infinite is moſt eſpecially (and perhaps moſt properly) applied to Two particular Attributes of God, his Immenſity, and Eternity; I ſhall here take Occaſion to ſay ſomething of 'em. God's Infinite

nite Presence is his Immensity, and his Infinite Duration is his Eternity.

As to his Omnipresence, tho' we cannot pretend to understand the Manner how he is present in all Places, yet not only Scripture, but Reason assures us he is so.

That Objection the *Socinians* make against the Omnipresence of God, from impure and nasty Places, is frivolous; for it supposes God to have Sense as Animals.

The greatest Difficulty, is, to conceive God's Immensity, without Divisibility into Parts; and how the Divine Essence can be whole every where.

I think it is not safe for us to define any thing as to the *Modus* of this Immensity of God; and freely to confess, that upon this as well as other Accounts, the Nature of God is to us Incomprehensible. But

1. It seems most rational to conclude, That the most Perfect Being must be every where; not included in, or limited by any Place, nor excluded out of any.

2. It ſeems very clear, That ſuch an Extenſion as we find Bodies have, that infers Diviſibility into Parts, is an Imperfection, and below the Excellent and Perfect Nature of God. And therefore, if God be every where, he muſt be ſo in ſome more perfect Manner than that of Corporeal Extenſion: For the Eſſence of God, whatever it be, muſt be Simple and Indiviſible.

3. The Difficulty of conceiving the Omnipreſence of God without Diviſibility, is no greater than that of conceiving a Finite Spirit, that we ſuppoſe to be in this or that Place, and not in any other at the ſame time.

For unleſs we ſuppoſe ſuch a Spirit to be in a Mathematical Point, the ſame Objection about Diviſibility will ſtill return.

And therefore the *Socinians*, who own Finite Spirits, have not at all mended the Matter, by ſuppoſing God to be only in Heaven as to his Eſſence, and every where only as to his Power and Energy.

For beſides, that it ſeems abſurd to ſeparate God's Power from his Eſſence, and

and no leſs abſurd to make him a Finite and Limited Spirit; there will be the ſame Objection againſt the Simplicity and Indiviſibility of his Eſſence upon their Suppoſition, as there is upon our ſuppoſing him Omnipreſent.

Unleſs (as I think ſome of them are not very averſe to) they ſuppoſe God, as the *Anthropomorphites* did, to be only a vaſt Great Body of Human Shape; and then indeed they effectually deſtroy both his Simplicity and Immenſity.

Nay, it ſeems as inconceivable, how God's Power and Providence can be every where, when his Eſſence is confin'd to a certain Place; as it is, how he can be every where whole and entire.

For if he be only in Heaven, we muſt either ſuppoſe that he hath Created an Infinite Number of Finite Spirits, to whom he leaves the Government of this Lower World: This was (as we find in *Heſiod*) the Opinion of ſome of the Ancient Heathen:

Or elſe we muſt ſuppoſe, he acts upon this Lower World only by the Mediation of Matter, as the Sun in the Firmament. And tho' this Sup-

poſition may be Conceivable as to ſome few *Phænomena*, yet we can no more conceive, that the whole Scheme and Extent of Providence can be accounted for this way, than we can have any juſt Notion of the Manner of the Omnipreſence of God.

But there is a greater Difficulty yet; and that is, How God can be ſaid to Preſerve and Uphold all Things in their Being, if he be not Omnipreſent?

For tho' we might ſuppoſe God to keep the World in Motion, by acting upon it at a diſtance by intermediate Matter; yet 'tis utterly unconceivable, how he can by the Influence of any intermediate Matter, conſerve Things in their Being, when he is not preſent with them.

I confeſs, according to the Opinion of thoſe who think there is requiſite a Poſitive Influx of an Omnipotent Cauſe, to Annihilation as well as to Creation; this would not be ſo great a Difficulty.

But I rather incline to think, that without the continual Power of God exerting it ſelf in Conſervation, as it did

did at firſt in Creation, all Things would fall to their firſt Nothing.

And the Scripture ſeems to favour this Opinion, when it tells us, that God *upholds all things by the word of his Power*, Heb. 1. And the Apoſtle, *Acts* 17. ſays, *In him we live, and move, and have our being.*

Tho' the *Greek* Particle ἐν, according to Hebraiſms very common in the New Teſtament, hath a great Variety of Signification; yet in this Place it ſeems to be very Emphatical, and to imply not only the general Conſerving Power of God, but his Intimate Preſence with all his Creatures.

However, as I ſaid before, if we have this (as I think, Juſt) Notion of the Conſerving Power of God, 'tis utterly impoſſible to conceive it can be, without his Omnipreſence. The Atheiſt perhaps will be apt to ſtart the forementioned Objection, againſt the Exiſtence both of an Infinite and Finite Spirit too; but (I think) without all Reaſon: For when ſuch an Extenſion as implies Diviſibility is plainly an Imperfection, and the very Ground of thoſe Mutations and that Corruption that Material Beings are

liable to; methinks 'tis highly probable there are nobler Beings, whose Essences are Simple and Indivisible. And if we allow any such Finite Spirits, notwithstanding this Objection from Extension and Divisibility; I see no Reason why we may not suppose an Infinite and Omnipresent One too.

As to the Attribute of Eternity, the first Question is, How we must conceive of the Eternity of God?

The Common Definition given of Eternity is, that it is *Interminabilis vitæ tota simul & perfecta possessio.*

The Schoolmen generally, and not a few of our modern Authors, interpret this Definition so, as to assert that there is no such thing as Succession of past, present, and to come, in the Eternity of God; but that it is *tota simul*, all at once, an Eternal *nunc stans*, an Eternal Now.

So that according to them, there must be an Essential Difference in the Duration of God, from that of the Creatures.

Others think that this, if it be not an absurd, yet it is at least an unintelligible Notion, and never to be cleared up, so as to make it intelligible to,

or

or of any Uſe againſt the Sceptick or Atheiſt. That we may as well ſuppoſe a Point commenſurate to a Line, as ſuch a *nunc ſtans* to a Perpetual Duration. That we may as eaſily ſuppoſe the Immenſity of God to be a Point, as his Eternity an Inſtant.

Theſe Men think it ſufficient to aſſert, That God has as full and comprehenſive a Knowledge of all Things paſt, preſent, and to come, with one View of his Underſtanding; and that Things to come are as much ſubject to his Knowledge, and his Powerful Guidance and Direction, as if they were all at once actually preſent to him. That as long as we ſecure the Immutability of God, and believe that God neither gets nor loſes any thing by a Succeſſive Duration; that he is the *ſame yeſterday, and to day, and forever*; their Notion of Duration, or Time, will ſerve as well to all the Purpoſes of God's Excellency and Perfection, as that of the other.

And indeed it ſeems, that Time (as related to any particular Being) is nothing but the Duration of it; which ſeems to have no relation at all to the Reſt or Motion, to the Mutability

lity or Immutability of the Subject of that Duration.

Only when we come to compare the Duration of one Thing with that of another, we are forced to meaſure their common Duration by ſome Regular Motion; by the certain, conſtant, and regular Proceſs of which, we may judge of that Duration.

But if any judge this will not clear the Matter, and that there muſt be ſuch an Eſſential Difference between the Duration of God and the Creatures, and that not to aſſert it would derogate any thing from the Excellency and Perfection of God; I ſhall not diſpute the Point with them.

That God is Eternal, is plain; for Something muſt be Eternal, or elſe Nothing could be at all. If God be not Eternal, he can never be at all: For certainly, tho' if we ſuppoſe ſuch an abſolutely Perfect Being as God is, to be Eternal and Self-exiſtent, we may eaſily grant him to be the Author and Cauſe of other Things: Yet if we ſuppoſe him not to be Self-exiſtent, or (which is all one) Eternal, we are ſure upon that Suppoſition, he can never be at all: It being utterly impoſ-

impoſſible, that any thing that was not before ſhould come into Being without a Cauſe; and we are ſure, nothing in the World can poſſibly be the Cauſe of ſuch a Being as God is.

Nay indeed, the Atheiſt himſelf cannot have the Confidence to object any thing againſt the Being of God, upon account of our aſcribing to him this Attribute of Eternity; when he muſt own, that ſomething muſt be Eternal, and he himſelf attributes Eternity to dull and ſenſeleſs Matter, the moſt imperfect of all thoſe Things that deſerve to be called Beings.

And therefore we find, the Atheiſts do not object againſt the Exiſtence of a God, becauſe we ſay he is Eternal; but that they may ſhew, there is no need of an Eternal God to ſolve the *Phænomena* of Nature; and that they may not be forced to acknowledge ſuch an Eternal Being as God is, they aſcribe this Eternity to other Things, which they ſubſtitute inſtead of a God. As

1. All ſorts of Atheiſts agree in this, that they aſſert Matter to be Eternal, Ingenerable, and Incorruptible.

Some

Some ſuppoſe the Atoms, or ſmall Particles of Matter, by infinite Motions and Eſſays, at length by Chance fell into this Regular Frame. This was the *Hypotheſis* of the *Epicureans*.

Others, much to the ſame purpoſe; That out of the Power of Matter were generated Forms and Qualities; as *Anaximander*.

Others; That not only Motion, but Life, Senſe, and Underſtanding, is included in Matter, and Natural to it. Theſe are called the *Hylozoiſts*, or thoſe that aſſert Life belongs to Matter as Matter.

Others there are, that aſſert there is One Common Regular (tho' Senſeleſs and Unintelligent) Plaſtick Nature; that forms Matter into this Regular Frame: And theſe were the Stoical Atheiſts.

As to the Eternity of Matter, I have theſe Two Things to aſſert againſt the Atheiſts.

1. That it ſeems very Rational to conclude, That Matter did not Exiſt from Eternity. 2. That if it did, it will be ſtill as difficult to give any tolerable Account of the Regular Frame of the World, as it was before.

1. That

1. That it is much more probable, that Matter did not Exist from Eternity; but was Created by God. And that if we consider,

1. That it is agreeable to Reason to conclude, That there is but One Independent, Self-existent, Eternal Being. The very Notion of Independent and absolutely Perfect, which is very near allied to Self-existent or Eternal, seems to imply Unity in it self.

2. The very Supposal of Independency, Absolute Perfection, Omnipotence, seems to imply, That all other Beings must (as to their Existence) depend upon that One Independent, absolutely Perfect, Self-existent, or Eternal Being; and consequently, that Matter, as to its Existence, cannot be Self-dependent, but must originally come from that One Independent, Self-existent, Eternal Being, that we call God.

3. It is reasonable to think, the lower and meaner any thing is in the Rank of Being, the more likely it is to be dependent upon some more Noble Being.

Now

Now mere dull and ſtupid Matter, diveſted of all noble Forms and regular Frame, *the rudis indigeſtaque Moles of Matter*, is the meaneſt of any thing we know in the Rank of Being, and therefore moſt likely as to its Exiſtence, to depend upon ſome ſuch Noble and abſolutely Perfect Being as we ſuppoſe God to be.

4. Being it is moſt rational to believe there is but One Eternal, Self-exiſtent, Independent Being, 'tis much eaſier to ſuppoſe that God created Matter, than to make a kind of God Almighty, as all Atheiſts do, of ſuch a dull and ſtupid thing as Matter is; and to ſuppoſe it ſome way or other (no-body knows how) not only to be That out of which, but by which all things were made.

Indeed *Spinoſa* makes it plainly appear, that Matter is his God. He tells us, that Exiſtence is included in the very Nature and Notion of Subſtance; and that the Exiſtence of it is an Eternal Truth; that there is but one Subſtance: That Subſtance is infinite: That there neither is nor can be any Subſtance but God; for no Subſtance can be produced, nor can one Subſtance pro-

produce another. That the essential Properties of Substance are Extension and Cogitation. And because he must assert but One God, he makes Substance indivisible, (that is, there is no Vacuum) and that it is not compounded of Parts; and that all the supposed Parts are only modally distinguished.

So that it's plain Old *Strato*'s Ghost, tho he hath been dead so long ago, begins to walk again. This is but the old *Hylozoick* Hypothesis, (with some absurd Additions,) That Life, Sense, and Understanding is essential to Matter; set out with a great Pomp of precarious Definitions, and pretended Demonstrations, in the Mathematical way.

For when he tells us there is but One Substance; and that there is no Substance but God; and that the essential Attributes of this Substance are Cogitation and Extension; by this Substance he must mean (and 'tis plain from his Book he does so) Corporeal Substance or Matter to be his God.

I now come to the Second Thing, and that is, If we should suppose Matter

ter to be Eternal, yet that will not at all ſuperſede the neceſſity of believing a God: It being utterly impoſſible to give any tolerable Account of the Frame and Fabrick of this World, (tho Matter were Eternal) without the Suppoſal of a God.

It cannot be denied, but moſt of the Ancient Philoſophers that we have any Acquaintance with, held the Eternity of Matter; ſuch as *Plato*, *Ariſtotle*, and others.

They generally make Two Principles, Mind and Matter.

And if any ſhould think ſo now, I ſhould be far from charging them with Atheiſm, as long as they own and believe a moſt Perfect Intelligent Being, that preſides over the Motions and Mutations of Matter, and by its powerful Operation produces out of it ſuch an orderly and regular Frame, as that of the World that is now before us, and preſerves and governs it when it is made.

And here it may be worth our while to conſider, what Account the Atheiſt gives of this regular Frame of Things, without ſuppoſing a God.

And the first Supposition is that of *Democritus* and *Epicurus*, That all Things came not from any Mind and Understanding, but from Senseless Nature and Chance. That after the various infinite Motions of the Atoms and Particles of Matter, wherein all Tricks were tried, and all manner of Forms experimented; they came at last to Settle in this Orderly and Regular Frame of Things, we see before our Eyes.

But as to this *Hypothesis*, we may consider, That it may seem one of the most absurd Things in the World, to attribute that to mere Chance, in which there appear plain Footsteps of the Highest Wisdom.

Tully somewhere tells us, That the Order and Constancy of the Heavenly Motions, can neither be ascribed to Nature, nor Fortune; but is full of the highest Reason and Wisdom.

And in another place; What can possibly be clearer, says he, than when we look up to Heaven, that there must be some Deity, of a most excellent Mind and Wisdom, by whom these Things are govern'd? And again;

That all the Parts of the World are ſo framed, as they could neither be fairer to the Sight, nor better for Uſe.

And therefore he concludes; He ſcarce deſerves the Name of a Man, that aſcribes 'em to Chance, and does not ſee in 'em the Prints and Footſteps of the Higheſt Wiſdom.

2. 'Tis utterly impoſſible, that ſuch a Regular Frame, where there is ſuch vaſt and infinite Variety of Noble Creatures, ſhould ever ariſe by the mere Caſual Motions of the Parts of Matter. It might, as far as we can ſee, move for endleſs Ages, before it could hit on any one ſuch *Species* of Animals, as we find ſo vaſt a Variety of in the World.

We have a famous Paſſage even of Mr. *Hobbs* himſelf ('tis a little Wonder how it came to drop from him,) to this purpoſe; They, ſays he, that can look upon all the Parts of an Animal, and yet not ſee they were made and adapted to their ſeveral Offices by ſome Mind; *Ipſi profecto ſine mente eſſe cenſendi ſunt*, they muſt be thought not to be Men themſelves. *Hobbs de Hom. C.* 1.

And

And if it be out of the Power of Caſual Nature ever to light upon any ſuch Regular Syſtem as that of any one Animal, how much more upon ſo infinite a Variety of Regular Syſtems of Matter, as are to be found in the Heavenly and Earthly Bodies we daily ſee, and others perhaps in other Orbs that we know nothing of.

If we ſee any excellent and regular Piece of Art, (as for inſtance, a fair Structure, or a fine Picture;) we preſently think of, and admire the Skill of the Artificer, tho' we do not know who he is, or did not ſee him work.

How much more Reaſon is there we ſhould believe the ſame of the Works of Nature, that are ſo incomparably more acurate and artificial, that all the Art that ever was ſhewn in the World (put it all together) comes not near that of the Structure of the meaneſt Animal; why, I ſay, ſhould we not think there is a Divine Artificer, or an infinitely Wiſe God, tho' we do not ſee him work?

Tully ſays, If the Caſual Concourſe of Atoms can make a World, why can it not make a Porch, a Temple,

an Houſe, or a City, which are ſo much eaſier than that?

If any (ſome Hundred Years hence) ſhould aſſert of this Noble and Stately Fabrick where we now are, That the Stones, Brick, Lime, Mortar, and Timber, met together by mere Chance, and rang'd themſelves without the help of any Hands or Engines, without the Art or Contrivance of any Architect, into this Stately Regular Frame in which now they are; he would only deſerve to be laugh'd at for his Folly.

Yet this is a Thouſand times eaſier than the *Epicurean* Suppoſition, of the World's being made by Chance.

If all the Men upon the Vaſt Continent of *Europe*, *Aſia*, and *Africa*, were ſtruck blind on a ſudden, and required to meet together in the Plains of *Meſopotamia*; how many Ages (if they could be ſuppoſed to live ſo long) might they wander up and down before it were done? Yet this is infinitely eaſier than what the *Democritick* Atheiſt would have us think is a poſſible and plauſible Account of the Beginning of the World without a God; (*i. e.*) That blind and ſenſeleſs Matter,

ter, ſhould (tho' it were by never ſo many Millions of Caſual Motions) ever meet and fix in ſo many Regular Syſtems, as we ſee in this Noble Fabrick of the World.

So that we may well conclude the Hypotheſis of the *Epicurean* Atheiſt is utterly impoſſible.

3. How comes it to paſs, that in ſo many Thouſands of Years, as far as Hiſtory informs us, no new Species of Being, ſuppoſe of Animals, have been produced?

Chance is ſo irregular a thing, that we may as well ſuppoſe it to produce Hundreds and Thouſands more Species of Beings out of Matter, as thoſe it is ſuppoſed to have produced already.

And therefore we may well conclude, that ſince no new Species have been, as far as we can tell, produced for ſo many Thouſand Years, thoſe that are already, depend upon the Will and Wiſdom of ſome ſuch Intelligent and Powerful Being as we ſuppoſe God to be; and not upon the mere caſual Motions of blind and ſenſeleſs Matter.

4. Nor is there any account to be given, why and how the World ſhould ſo long continue in ſuch a regular Frame as now it is, and we are ſure for ſome Thouſands of Years it has been, without any conſiderable Alteration.

If Chance had made the World, in all probability Chance would long e're now have marr'd it too.

Nor is there any Reaſon to think, if the World by ſome unimaginable Chance had ſometime hit into this regular Frame, that it ſhould have continued ſo, tho it were but the ſpace of one Day, much leſs for ſo many Thouſand Years; and that it does ſo, upon the *Epicurean* Suppoſition, is the greateſt Chance in the World, next to the making of it by Chance.

For ſince by the very Suppoſition, Matter is indifferent to all Motions, and its Motions are merely caſual, the Motions of the Atoms and Particles of any quantity of Matter, that by Chance has hit into a regular Syſtem, muſt be ſtill caſual; and there will be a much greater Tendency in the Motions of that particular Syſtem to a Diſſolution of the Syſtem, than there

there was or could be in the general caſual Motions of Matter to the making of it.

Indeed the *Epicureans* talk of a certain Gravitation in Matter, that they ſuppoſe is the Principle of its Motions: But this is in a ſort to ſuppoſe the World made before it was made: Nor could there be any Gravitation of Matter, or Tendency in it to a Center, when probably there were no Centers; nor could the World be made by Chance, without a great many other ſorts of Motion, beſides that of Gravitation, or a direct Tendency of Motion towards ſome Center.

If the Atheiſt ſhall ſay, The preſent Frame of the World is moſt eaſy and natural, and therefore continues as it is; how will he prove it, or what Reaſon can he give why it is ſo?

I may with much more Reaſon ſay, That on his Suppoſition there is no ſuch thing as Nature: For Nature, in the loweſt Senſe and Signification of it, muſt denote a fixt and regular State, and proceſs of Motions, of Generations and Corruptions; but upon the *Epicurean* Suppoſition there can be no ſuch thing.

If we mean indeed by Nature, a diſtinct Powerful Intelligent Principle, that by its Power and Energy preſerves and continues the preſent Frame of the World; this is what we would have the Atheiſt believe; *i. e.* a God. But then we ſay, that if the World cannot be continued in this beautiful and regular Frame, without ſuch an Intelligent Principle as they may call Nature, and we call God; much leſs could it be made without it. But if we could ſuppoſe, that by the infinite variety of the caſual Motions of the Parts of Matter, there could in ſome lucky Moment happen ſuch a regular Frame as that of this World; yet it could ſcarce continue a Moment, without ſuch an Alteration as would be deſtructive of the Beauty and Harmony of it.

And therefore we cannot but think *Des Cartes* much too bold, when only ſuppoſing that God had impreſſed upon Matter at firſt ſuch a quantity of Motion, he takes God along with him no further, but pretends to tell us how the World might be made, or rather make it ſelf.

And

And tho we cannot accuse him of Atheism, yet we think his Hypothesis has too great a Tendency to it, and borders too much on this *Epicurean* Account of the making of the World.

Nor would I have any think the Time is ill spent in exposing this Hypothesis: For tho our Modern Atheists do not so much insist on the *Epicurean* Scheme directly and explicitly, yet it is easy to shew that all the other Atheistical *Hypotheses* that shut God out of the World, must be derived from and grounded upon this.

And yet the *Democritick* Atheists are so sensible how weak and insufficient this Account is of such a Glorious and Regular System as that of this World, that they tell us for their Excuse, there are infinite Worlds besides this; tho' (it may be) not one of them so exactly uniform and regular as this is. This is *gratis dictum*; 'tis enough for us, that we know such a World as this we live in could never be made by mere Chance, without some Wise and Powerful Being guiding and directing the Motions of Matter.

The

The next Atheiſtical *Hypotheſis*, is, that which derives all Things from Dead and Senſeleſs Matter, by way of Forms and Qualities.

This is very much of the ſame Nature, and liable to the ſame Exceptions with that of the *Democritick* or *Epicurean* Atheiſts.

For if theſe ſuppoſed Forms and Qualities be really any thing diſtinct from Matter, they muſt either proceed from ſome diſtinct, intelligent, generating Principle: And if the Atheiſt ſuppoſe this, he muſt ſuppoſe a God:

Or they muſt be made by ſome Native Energy, that is ſuppoſed to be innate in Matter. And this Suppoſition falls in exactly with the *Hylozoick Hypotheſis*, that makes Life it ſelf Natural to Matter; and is to be ſpoke to when we come to that *Hypotheſis*. Or elſe theſe Forms and Qualities muſt be educed out of the Power of Matter; and this muſt ſtill be (if we ſuppoſe no God) by the mere Caſual Motions of the Parts of Matter: And then they muſt be ſuppoſed to be only ſo many Appearances to our Senſes, ariſing

ſing from the infinite Variety in the Figure, Site, and Motion of the Parts of Matter. And this falls in with the *Epicurean Hypotheſis*: So that there is no Occaſion I ſhould ſay any thing more of the Abſurdity of this *Hypotheſis*.

The Third Suppoſition is, That all Matter is endued with a Natural Plaſtick Life, neceſſary, ingenerable, and incorruptible.

This Suppoſition has indeed a cloſe Connection with Atheiſm: For if Matter have ſuch a ſelf-active Power, as to improve it ſelf into Life, Senſe, Conſcious Underſtanding, and Self-enjoyment; there needs no God.

This is indeed a very wild Aſſertion, and therefore tho' very anciently affirmed by *Strato*, yet never gain'd any Reputation, till lately reviv'd by ſome modern Atheiſts.

This is indeed to ſuppoſe Matter perfectly wiſe, when it has no Knowledge at all, as far as we can diſcern by Experience and Obſervation. To ſuppoſe Matter, and every Particle of it, to underſtand all its own Congruities and Capacities; which we muſt ſup-

ſuppoſe, if we ſuppoſe it to form it ſelf into Plants or Animals, is indeed to ſuppoſe it to have a greater and more perfect Knowledge before its Formation into the ſeveral *Species* of Being, than it has after, and to know that which the moſt Rational Beings know little or nothing of.

Nay indeed, if all Matter as Matter is endued with Senſe and Underſtanding; what Account can be given why the whole Maſs of Matter ſhould not become Animals, and we ſhould have nothing but Senſitive or Rational Beings in the World?

Nay, we might drive this a little further, and ſay as ſome have done, That the World it ſelf may be a great Animal, or (as *Spinoſa* ſeems to ſuppoſe) a God.

But ſince all theſe Suppoſitions are ſo abſurd in themſelves, and ſo plainly contrary to Experience; we may well conclude, That Life, but eſpecially Senſe and Underſtanding, are diſtinct from Matter, and above the Power of it.

But of this I ſhall ſay more in another Place.

The

The Fourth Atheistical Supposition is that of some of the *Stoicks*; That there is One Common, Regular, and Methodical, (but Unintelligent) Plastick Nature, that is the Cause of this Regular Frame of Things.

If they mean by Plastick Nature, the Course of Nature, they must return to some One of the foregoing Suppositions; That all Things were generated, either by mere Chance, and the fortuitous Motions of Matter, or by some Native Life and Energy in Matter; and so they assert nothing distinct from the rest of the Atheists.

If they mean by Plastick Nature, some Active Principle distinct from Matter; I think, they in effect give up the Cause of Atheism. For,

1. It is as impossible to suppose, that any such Unintelligent Plastick Nature should be so constant and regular in its Operations, as we see it must be by the Frame of the World; without depending on, and being guided by some Superior Intelligent Nature; as it is to suppose the World made by Chance, or to proceed from any Native Life and Energy of Matter.

2. If

2. If we can ſuppoſe One Vegetative, Unintelligent, Plaſtick Nature, diſtinct from Matter; why may we not ſuppoſe ſuch a Rational, Intelligent, Powerful Being as God is? And to be ſure, 'tis much eaſier to believe ſuch a Being to be the Cauſe of ſuch a Regular Frame as that of this World, than ſuch a Blind and Senſeleſs Nature as the Stoical Atheiſts ſuppoſe to be the Cauſe of it.

And thus I have ſaid ſomething very briefly of the ſeveral Accounts the Atheiſt gives of the Exiſtence of this World without a God: And upon the whole it will appear, there is no Reaſon at all to believe (from what Account the Atheiſt gives of the Exiſtence of the World) that there is no God; and that we may well conclude, that there is a God, that is the Creator, and Maker of the World.

And I ſhould now come to ſpeak of thoſe Objections, that are made by the Atheiſt againſt what we attribute to God, as we ſuppoſe him to be the Maker of the World.

But before I do this, I might ſpeak a word or two, whether the World it ſelf, not only as to the Matter, but as

as to the Form of it too, may not be supposed to be Eternal.

Now as to this Eternity of the World, there may be two Suppositions; the one supposes a God, and the other not.

1. Some that have asserted the Eternity of the World, seem to have supposed it to be so, by way of Emanation from the Divine Nature, as Light is from the Sun.

This seems to have been the Opinion of *Aristotle*; who tho he asserts the Eternity of the World, yet so plainly in other places owns a God as the Cause of it, that one cannot but think he was of the Opinion, That the World it self was Eternal, by way of Emanation from God.

This is indeed an absurd Opinion, as making God a necessary Agent, and discarding all Liberty and Freedom in the Will of God, as to the Creation of the World. But however, they that hold this, cannot so properly be called Atheists.

Some have pretended likewise, That the World might be in the Form it now is, from Eternity.

But

But this ſeems abſurd; it being hard to conceive an Eternal Succeſſion of any ſort of Motions, (for inſtance, thoſe of the Heavens,) or of Generations and Corruptions, ſuch as thoſe of Animals on Earth: Our Thoughts will naturally lead us to ſome beginning of 'em.

'Tis true, we can eaſily have a Notion of the Eternal Exiſtence of ſuch an immutable Being as God is; that is, that there never was a Time when he was not: But it muſt be confeſs'd, that it is very hard to apply this to any Succeſſion of Motions and Generations; and therefore it appears at firſt ſight abſurd to ſuppoſe the World, in the ſtate it now is, was Eternal.

I confeſs I cannot inſiſt upon this as alone an infallible Demonſtration of the Being of a God, and the Creation of the World: But I muſt ſay it is much eaſier to apprehend the Eternity of ſuch a Perfect and Immutable Being as God is, than to apply that Notion to the World collectively conſider'd, or to any Beings that are a part of it; the very Frame and Conſtitution of which ſuppoſe many Motions and Mutations, which in their own Nature imply

imply a Beginning some time or other of such Motions and Mutations.

And therefore I cannot but think (tho we should set aside Revelation) it is much more rational to conclude the World had a Beginning, and that it some time or other was made by such an infinitely Powerful and Wise Being as we suppose God to be.

But here the Atheist makes an Objection against the Possibility of Creation, by alledging that common Rule in Philosophy, *Ex nihilo nihil fit*; Out of nothing can be made nothing.

As to which Maxim, we may first consider what is the Sense of it. And 'tis this; That no real Essence can begin to be, that was not before, without some material Cause, or without some preexistent Matter, out of which it must be made. And in this true Sense of the Proposition we may justly believe it is a false Proposition. For,

1. Many of the Ancient Philosophers did not think so. 'Tis plain, many at least of the *Platonists* did believe Human Souls, as that they were Essences distinct from the Body; so, that they were created by God out of nothing; that is, they were made

without any preexiſtent Matter out of which they were made.

And therefore they muſt needs underſtand that Maxim in Philoſophy, *Ex nihilo nihil fit*, Nothing can come from Nothing, only of thoſe Productions that are made according to the ordinary Courſe of Nature; none of which are made without ſome preexiſtent Matter.

2. I think there is a great deal of Reaſon we ſhould diſtinguiſh between what is done by the ordinary Courſe and Power of Nature, as now eſtabliſhed; and what may be, or is not impoſſible to be done, by an Abſolute, Unlimited, Infinite Power. It is not very reaſonable for us to pretend to determine what can or cannot be done by the moſt Perfect Power.

3. And this will appear the more reaſonable, if we conſider we can never prove, That to ſuppoſe Something to be produced from Nothing (that is, ſome real Eſſence to begin to be, that was not before, without any preexiſtent Matter, by the Power and Energy of ſome Cauſe,) implies a Contradiction.

'Tis true, it implies a Contradiction, that a Thing should be and not be, at the same time; but not at all, that a Thing that was not before should begin to be; if there be (as for ought we know there may) some Cause of sufficient Power to produce it, tho' there be nothing out of which it is made.

These Arguments will be the more cogent, if we consider there are a great many Operations in Nature, that as they have been all along thought by the best Philosophers to be above the Power of Material Beings, so may be sufficient to convince a Rational Man, that there are Substances distinct from Matter, and that were not made out of it, but probably by the immediate Power and Energy of some infinitely Powerful Being, such as we believe God to be.

And if we are convinced that there are such Immaterial Beings, distinct from Matter, created out of Nothing by some infinitely Powerful Spirit; we may much more easily suppose, Matter it self, (that is a much less noble and excellent Being, than those other by their Operations appear to

be;) was at first made out of Nothing by the Power of God.

But of these I shall speak in another Place.

We are apt indeed, in our Disputes both in Philosophy and Divinity, to run up every thing that we do not understand the *Medium* of, to a Contradiction; as the Atheist will (no doubt) do all Creation out of Nothing, from this received Principle in Philosophy, that *ex nihilo nihil fit*; Nothing can come out of Nothing.

This comes from our want of considering, That Contradictions are only clear in those Propositions, whose Terms being truly understood, the Assertion does destroy the very Supposition. As if we should say, The Whole is less than the Part: This (if we mean it in the same respect) plainly implies, the Whole not to be the Whole, and the Part not to be a Part.

But there are (and may be) Ten Thousand Things, possible or impossible, that we do not know enough of 'em to say, whether they be so or not; we cannot disprove 'em, by shewing that they imply a Contradiction.

Of

Of this kind, I suppose the Thing in question to be. For tho' it be a justly received Truth, That according to the Natural and Ordinary Course of Generations and Corruptions, Nothing is made out of Nothing, or without Pre-existent Matter; yet there is no Reason at all we should carry this so far, as to deny Creation out of Nothing, to an Infinite or most Perfect Power.

Nay indeed, the Atheist is guilty of more absurd Suppositions than this.

The *Epicurean* Atheist, that asserts the World was made by the Casual Motions of Matter, if he do not suppose such a Principle as God is, he must suppose that Motion originally came from Nothing; or that either all the whole Mass of Matter, or at least some Parts of it, contains in it a self-moving Principle; which yet he denies to God, the most Perfect Being.

Those Atheists that suppose Forms and Qualities, must either fall in with the *Epicureans*, and confess they are only Modifications of Matter; or they must suppose 'em generated out

of Nothing, and corrupted again into Nothing.

Thoſe that ſuppoſe Life, Senſe, and Underſtanding to reſult from Matter, do (in effect) ſuppoſe it to ariſe from Nothing; the nobleſt and higheſt Thing in the World, to come from the baſeſt and meaneſt: When we ſee plainly by Experience, that the nobleſt and moſt active Kinds of Matter have no ſuch things.

Thoſe that aſſert a blind, ſenſeleſs, Plaſtick Nature, in effect aſſert, That the Higheſt and Nobleſt Effects of Wiſdom reſult from Nothing; at leaſt from a Cauſe utterly inſufficient for the Production of 'em; that is, from a mere dull, lumpiſh, ſenſeleſs Nature.

And all this muſt be ſuppoſed to be done without any efficient, at leaſt any intelligent Cauſe at all. Which one would think ſhould be a wilder Suppoſition, than to ſuppoſe that Something may come from Nothing, by the Power and Efficacy of an Infinite or moſt perfectly Powerful Being, ſuch as we believe God to be.

Well,

Well, (in short) 'tis certain, Nothing can come from Nothing, without some Powerful Efficient Cause: But that there is no Cause so Perfect in Power, as to be able to produce Something out of Nothing, or out of no Pre-existent Matter, may be asserted, but can never be clearly proved by the Atheist.

And here it may not be amiss, to say something of that which those that believe a God ascribe to him; That he is the Original of Motion; as to which, I think, we may assert,

That an Infinite Series of Dependent Motions is impossible; and that it is a false Assertion of *Spinosa* and others, That whatever Body is moved, must be moved by another, and that by another, and so on without end.

For no Number of Motions can be actually infinite; we must at last come to a Beginning of Motion.

And therefore, whereever the Motion begun, or whencesoever it originally came; whether we suppose it from a Body, or some other more Noble Being, that Being must have in it self a self-moving Principle.

Now ſure, it is much more reaſonable to aſcribe the Original and Beginning of Motion to ſuch a Perfect Being as we ſuppoſe God to be, than to ſuch a dull and ſenſeleſs Thing as Matter.

And 'tis ſo far from being true, (as the Atheiſt boldly aſſerts,) That a Spirit cannot act upon Matter; that (according to the trueſt Idea we can get of Matter) 'tis impoſſible that any Part of Matter can be the Firſt and Original *Motor*, or begin any Motion, without being firſt moved by ſome Being or other, that has in it a ſelf-moving Principle; which to all appearance Matter cannot have.

But here ſome object, that Motion is Natural to Matter.

Here we muſt enquire, What thoſe that aſſert this mean, when they ſay, Motion is Natural to Matter?

Do they mean, that Motion is Natural to all Matter? Then muſt all Matter be naturally and conſtantly in Motion, and ſo there would never be any Reſt in any Parts of Matter, and conſequently there could be no Productions in Nature, nor any fixed State of Material Things.

Do

Do they mean, that Motion is Natural to some Parts of Matter; as for instance, to the finer and more subtile Parts of it, such as *Cartesius*'s *Materia primi Elementi*?

This may easily be granted, when there is really such a subtile Matter: But it may justly be question'd,

1. Whether such subtile Particles be originally in Matter? Or whether they did not rather come from that Motion that was impress'd upon, and conserved and carried on in the vast Bulk of Matter, by the first Original of Motion, that is, God? Or

2. Whether it be any thing to the Atheists purpose to assert this, when 'tis so plain to Reason, that this subtile fiery Matter, supposed to pervade all the grosser Bulk of Matter, cannot do any thing without the powerful Influence of some Higher Being, towards the Making such a World as this is.

3. To be sure, this *Materia subtilis*, that *Cartesius* supposes to be in perpetual Motion, (and therefore, if Motion be Natural to any Matter, 'tis to this;) could never it self have been generated by the mutual Attrition of the grosser Parts of Matter, without the

the ſpecial Influence of ſome Superior Being, carrying on thoſe Motions.

But (it may be) thoſe Men that aſſert Motion to be Natural to Matter, will ſay, they mean not actual Motion, but a *Conatus*, or Tendency to Motion in Matter.

If they mean by this Tendency to Motion, only a Natural Fitneſs or Aptitude for Motion; this is eaſily granted: But then this is nothing to the preſent Purpoſe, and muſt ſtill ſuppoſe ſome Original *Motor*, ſome Original of Motion diſtinct from Matter.

If they mean ſomething more yet by this *Conatus* or Tendency to Motion, and ſuppoſe this to be in all Matter as Matter; either they muſt ſuppoſe an equal Tendency of the Parts of Matter, every way at the ſame time; and then this will be but to ſuppoſe all Matter to be perfectly at Reſt, and that there can be no ſuch thing as Motion in Matter.

For when there is an equal Tendency of one Part of Matter this way, and of the adjacent Part of Matter the contrary way, and ſo of every Part of Matter every way; this is indeed to ſuppoſe there is no Tendency

to

to Motion any way; or at least if there be, 'tis to no purpose, and can never produce any Motion at all in Matter. This is much like a late Notion and Assertion in Philosophy, That every thing attracts every thing; which is in effect to say, that nothing attracts any thing.

Or if they suppose the Parts of Matter to tend one way more than another, they must suppose all the Parts of Matter to tend the same way: And tho' they should suppose this, 'tis very questionable, whether they can produce any Motion, without some *Vis impressa*, which supposes an Original of Motion.

Or if we could suppose any sort of Circular (or Direct) Motion to be begun in Matter, by any Native Gravitation of it, or such a Tendency of Matter directly to some Center; this can never be supposed to produce any such Mixture of Matter, as we plainly see is necessary to the Production of the several Species of Beings in the World.

Indeed, if we should grant all that some modern Philosophers do or can assert, or even suppose, concerning Mo-

Motion's being Natural to Matter; we are come no further than the very Beginning of the *Epicurean Hypotheſis*.

And therefore this Suppoſition will not at all ſerve the Atheiſt, unleſs he could ſhew it poſſible, that the mere Caſual Motions of the Parts of Matter, can (without ſome Intelligent Mind, and All-powerful and Wiſe Being) ever hit upon ſo Orderly and Regular a Frame as that of this World.

So that admit what Suppoſition we will, 'tis clear enough, that the World was Created; and that it could not ever come to be as it is, without ſome infinitely Wiſe and Powerful Being, ſuch as we believe God to be.

And thus I have done with thoſe Objections that the Atheiſts make againſt the Belief of a God, as to his being ſuppoſed to be the Creator of the World, and (which is much the ſame) the Original, the Source and Fountain of all the Motions of it.

I ſhould now come to conſider thoſe Objections which are made againſt the Being of a God, with reſpect to another Attribute that all that believe a God aſcribe to him, and that is Omniſcience,

niscience, or perfect Knowledge and Wisdom.

But because the Atheist must own there is such a thing as Knowledge and Wisdom in the World, and yet is unwilling to own a God, that is, a Being Omniscient, or of most Perfect Knowledge and Wisdom, he must some way or other ascribe this Knowledge to meer Matter, and assert there is no such thing as immaterial or incorporeal Beings in the World.

Before I proceed any further therefore, I must say something as to that grand Objection the Atheist makes against the Being of a God, as he is supposed to be a Spirit, or an incorporeal and immaterial Being.

Let us consider therefore what is the Opinion of the ancient and modern Atheists as to this Matter.

Both *Plato* and *Aristotle*, *Sextus Empircus*, and *Lucretius*, assure us, there were many of Old that thought there was but one Nature; that there is nothing but Body, and that all other things are but the Passions and Affections of that.

So that our modern Atheists are not the first Inventors of this Notion, they only

only tread in the Steps of the Ancients; only they have a little refin'd upon ſome of their Notions, and expreſs themſelves with ſomething more of Confidence in the Matter.

Thus Mr. *Hobs* tells us, That to aſſert immaterial Subſtance, is not Error, but Nonſenſe; that to talk of incorporeal Subſtance, is as much as to ſay an incorporeal Body; and becauſe he muſt for Faſhion ſake own a God, he aſſerts God to be a moſt pure, ſimple and corporeal Spirit.

Spinoſa aſſerts as much, tho' not in expreſs Terms, yet in juſt Conſequence, when he tells us there is but one Subſtance; that there is no Subſtance but God, whoſe eſſential Attributes are Extenſion and Cogitation; ſo that according to him there muſt be no Subſtance, but Matter, only one of the eſſential Properties of this Matter is Cogitation as well as Extenſion.

But on the contrary, we believe that there is in the World a Subſtance or Eſſence diſtinct from and much more noble and excellent than that of Matter or Body, and particularly that there is one infinite and moſt perfect Eſſence or Subſtance that we call God.

'Tis

'Tis plain the Scripture tells us that God is a Spirit, and ſpeaks every where of Angels or good Spirits, and Devils or evil Spirits, of the Souls of Men as diſtinct from the Body.

Nor can what either Mr. *Hobbs* ſome Time ago, or ſome other later Authors have ſaid to elude thoſe places of Scripture that ſpeak of theſe things, ſo much as put any tolerable Gloſs on their Opinion.

And 'tis no leſs plain that the Generality of the ancient *Greek* and *Roman* Philoſophers own immaterial or incorporeal Subſtances, and plainly diſtinguiſh between Mind and Body, between the paſſive and active Principle.

And even thoſe of them that ſeem to think Matter to be eternal, yet plainly own there muſt be a powerful active Principle they call Spirit or Mind, diſtinct from Matter, without which Body or Matter would remain a dull unactive and ſtupid thing, uncapable of ever arriving at any regular Frame.

And whereas Mr. *Hobbs* pretends this Notion proceeded only from the abuſe of abſtract Names, and of *Ariſtotle*'s Philoſophy about Forms and Qualities,

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'tis to be obſerv'd that this Opinion prevailed among the beſt Philoſophers, long before *Ariſtotle* himſelf was born; much more, long before his Philoſophy had ſuch a Vogue in the World.

It was the common Opinion under the ancient and truly genuine Atomick Philoſophy, long before *Democritus*, *Leucippus* or *Epicurus*, corrupted that Philoſophy, by pretending to make a World by the meer caſual Motion of Matter without a God.

Sure if incorporeal Subſtance were ſuch a nonſenſical or contradictory thing as theſe Gentlemen make it, it would ſcarce have been ſo generally received by the beſt Philoſophers, both Heathen and Chriſtian, ſo long ago.

We have a late Author that (being to prove the Mortality of the Soul, or rather that there is no ſuch thing as a Soul in Man, diſtinct from the Body) throws off this Argument, by ridiculing the Notion of Soul or Spirit, as an old Heathenish and Popiſh Notion; as if it had been only a Piece of Prieſt-craft, for a pretence to kindle the Chymical Fire of Purgatory to make Gold.

But

But we may ſuppoſe he takes this Courſe, becauſe he ſaw it would be hard upon him, to diſpute not only againſt the Reaſon of the Thing, and Scripture too, but againſt the commonly received Notions of the Wiſeſt Men, and Beſt Philoſophers, (both Heathen and Chriſtian) from the firſt Hiſtory we have of Philoſophy, down to this preſent Time.

And to make ſuch Inſinuations paſs the eaſier upon Mankind, we may obſerve another Artifice our modern Corporealiſts make uſe of; and that is, (in their Books) to write a long Chapter of the Power of Prejudices; whereby they would inſinuate, that all the Old-received Notions of Incorporeal Subſtances diſtinct from the Body, are only Prejudicate Opinions, Notions taken upon truſt, and built upon the Authority of Others.

And you muſt take it for granted, that theſe Free Thinkers have reaſon'd, forſooth, without the leaſt Prejudice, and have ſet Philoſophy free from its Bondage to the Authority of Men.

Well, be this as it will; let us come to the Thing it ſelf.

It is a very unfair and uncertain way of arguing, to diſpute againſt the Exiſtence of a Thing, becauſe we have no juſt Notion and Conception of it. For there are a Thouſand Things that may be, and ('tis likely) really are, that we have no adequate Idea of, if any at all, and therefore we cannot argue certainly about 'em, whether they be or not.

Nay, thoſe Things that are now moſt obvious, if we had been created without ſuch Faculties as give us notice of 'em, would probably have appeared impoſſible. Thus, What Idea could a Man born blind have of Colours; or a Man without Ears, of Sound; or one that never had any Taſte, of Savour?

If any ſhall ſay, We might be convinced of theſe Things by Reaſon, and the Information of other Men: The Caſe is ſo here. We not only have the concurrent Teſtimony of the beſt and wiſeſt Men in all Ages, that there are Incorporeal Beings; but we are as ſure as we well can be in any ſuch Caſe, that the Faculties we plainly ſee in ſome Intelligent Beings, are above the Power of mere Matter.

And we are no less sure, that such a Glorious Regular Frame as that of this World, could neither make it self, or come to be without a Cause, by any Native Power in Matter, or the Casual Motions of it, nor be made by any thing that is obvious to Sense; but must require such an infinitely Wise and Powerful Being as God is.

2. Upon strict Enquiry we shall find, we have no just Notion of the true Essence of Matter it self, farther than that we are sure that such and such Properties (that we plainly perceive in it) must have some Subject in which they inhere, and that must be the Support of 'em.

3. It is the Opinion of some great Philosophers, That there are such Properties as cannot belong to Body, that yet are as plain, and clear, and intelligible, as those that Sense and Experience tell us are the Properties of it.

The Properties of Matter that are obvious to our Observation, are these, Extension, Divisibility, Figure, Capacity of Motion, Impenetrability.

The Properties that are commonly aſcribed to a Spirit, are, Self-penetration, Self-motion, and Indiviſibility: And, with reſpect to Matter, Penetrating, Moving, Altering Matter, and being United to an Organical Body.

As to the Indiviſibility of a Spirit, they object, That 'tis impoſſible to conceive ſuch a Being without Extenſion, or that without Diviſibility into Parts. But

I think, 'tis clear, that Diviſibility into Parts is an Imperfection; and an Eſſence Simple, and Uniform, and Indiviſible, and conſequently not naturally ſubject to Diſſolution, by any Diſunion or Disjunction of Parts, muſt be more perfect than any Material Things can be.

2. There is no greater Difficulty in conceiving a Simple Eſſence, without ſuch Extenſion or Quantity, as muſt imply its being diviſible into Parts; than there plainly is in conceiving the Diviſibility of Matter *in infinitum*.

We find, thoſe that are throughly vers'd in Mathematicks, aſſert roundly, That Matter is (and muſt be) diviſible *in infinitum*; and that this

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is as demonſtrable as any thing in the World can be, tho' to vulgar Apprehenſion this ſeems to imply, there muſt be as many Parts in a Cube of an Inch Diameter, as there is in the whole Body of the Earth.

All that is to my purpoſe, is, Whatever Demonſtration there may be given of the infinite Diviſibility of Matter, our Underſtanding muſt be as much at a loſs in the conceiving of it, as it can be in conceiving a Spirit, or a Simple Eſſence without ſuch Extenſion as implies Diviſibility.

Another thing commonly attributed to a Spirit, is, Self-motion, and the Moving of Matter.

Now the Atheiſt has no Reaſon to object againſt this, when he himſelf aſcribes it to Matter.

But if Self-motion be impoſſible in Matter, as no doubt it is, there muſt be ſomething ſuch as we call Spirit in the World, or there could never be any ſuch thing as Motion.

Moſt Philoſophers (and particularly *Des Cartes*) allow Matter to be originally Uniform: So that if we ſuppoſe either Motion or Reſt to be Natural to Matter, it muſt be ſo to all Matter.

If we ſuppoſe Motion Natural to all Matter, it muſt be abſolutely neceſſary, and ſo there could never be any Regular Productions out of Matter; for the ſame neceſſary Motion that might happen to make 'em, would unmake 'em again.

If (as is more reaſonable) we ſuppoſe Reſt originally Natural to Matter, and that it was only endued with a Capacity of Motion; 'tis plain, Motion could never be begun, without ſome higher Principle than Matter.

So that which ſoever of the two we ſuppoſe, there muſt at once be ſuppoſed ſome infinitely Powerful Being, that muſt either begin Motion in Matter, or guide, direct, ſtop, and bound the irregular Motions of Matter, in order to the Production of Beings out of it.

Indeed, it may not be ſo proper to call this Power of Motion in an Infinite Spirit, Self-motion, becauſe it is ſuppoſed to be Omnipreſent; but when this is communicated to a Finite Spirit, as we have no Reaſon to doubt it may be, 'tis proper enough to call it Self-activity, or Self-motion.

And

And 'tis much easier to conceive this of a Simple, Undivided Essence, such as we suppose a Spirit to be, than of any Part of Matter.

But they object, A Spirit cannot move Matter, because it is supposed to penetrate it, and cannot act upon the Surface of it.

To this I answer;

'Tis confess'd, that Matter acts upon Matter by its Surface: But it cannot do this without a *Vis impressa*, which must originally come from some higher Principle than mere Matter.

If we grant this, it takes off the Objection; and we ought not to suppose a Spirit cannot act upon Matter, (when we plainly see it must do so) because we cannot understand how it takes hold of it, or acts upon it.

Nay indeed, it seems reasonable to suppose, that Spirits, as their very Nature gives 'em a Capacity of penetrating Matter, so (as they are Free Agents) when they please they may have a greater Power over any Part of Matter, than any Material Thing can be supposed to have.

Nay, if thoſe that object this will ſuppoſe with us that Spirits can penetrate Matter, I think they may eaſily believe, that they have a greater Power over Matter by this Penetration, than they could have, if they could, like Bodies, act only on the Surface of it.

And it ſeems reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that upon the account of this very Penetration of Matter, there may be a cloſer Union of Spirit with Body, than there can be of any Parts of Matter between themſelves.

And this leads me to another Property of a Finite Spirit, that it may be united to an Organical Body.

It was the Opinion of ſome Ancient Philoſophers, That only God the Supreme, and Infinite, and moſt Perfect Spirit, was without all Body; and that all Created Spirits had ſome kind of Bodies, ſome Terreſtrial, others Aerial, or Ætherial, with which they were united, and in which they acted.

But this (will the Atheiſt ſay) is impoſſible, that ſuch a pure ſimple Eſſence, as we ſuppoſe a Spirit to be, ſhould

ſhould be united with ſuch a groſs Thing as Matter is.

Now before we grant the Atheiſt this, we requeſt him to tell us, how the Parts of Solid Matter (ſuch as Wood and Stone) are ſo cloſely united?

What Hooks or Cement is the Cauſe of this Union? And ſince thoſe muſt have Parts, (for Matter is diviſible *in infinitum*;) What unites thoſe Parts together?

Is it only cloſe Contact of Surface? The moſt Solid Bodies (as appears to Experience) have many Interſtices and Vacuities, that are capable of being fill'd with, and are pervious to ſome more ſubtile and Heterogeneous Matter.

Is it (as *Carteſius* ſeems to ſuppoſe) only Reſt that does it? This likewiſe is againſt Experience.

So that 'tis plain, we know as little of the true Cauſe (or *Modus*) of the Union of the Parts of Matter, as we do of the Uniting of Spirit with Matter.

Will the Atheiſt ſay, there is no ſuch thing as Solid Matter, becauſe he knows nothing of the Cauſe of that Solidity? So

So that as far as we can judge, the Properties that are commonly aſcribed to a Spirit, or Immaterial Subſtance, are as conceivable and accountable, as thoſe that are taken for granted to belong to Matter.

But the Atheiſt (it may be) will ſay, 'Tis needleſs to ſuppoſe ſuch a Thing as Immaterial Subſtance, or Spirit; becauſe all the *Phænomena* may be ſolved by mere Matter, and the Properties that are aſcribed to Incorporeal Subſtance, may and do belong to Matter.

Our modern Corporealiſts tell us, Senſe, Imagination, Underſtanding, Memory, Reaſon, Spontaneous Motion, may be only the Effects of the Motion of Matter in Organical Bodies. So that a Man may be mere Organized Matter.

And upon the ſame ground *Spinoſa* will tell us, that there needs nothing but Matter: For there neither is, nor can be but One Subſtance; and Cogitation, as well as Extenſion, is an Eſſential Property of that Subſtance.

As to *Spinoſa*'s Notion, of Cogitation being Eſſential to Matter, 'tis ſo big with Monſtrous Abſurdities, that

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'tis a wonder any one can have the Confidence to defend it.

Upon this Supposition, every Particle of Matter must be an Intelligent Being, if not a God.

Or if we suppose with him, that all the Collective Mass of Beings is God; What a strange kind of Deity will this make; subject to all the Imperfections, Changes, and Alterations, that can be imagined in all or any of the Parts of Matter?

But to compleat the Absurdity of his *Hypothesis*, as he says there is but One Substance, so he tells us, this Substance is indivisible: When 'tis so plain to Reason and Experience, that each Particle of Matter is a distinct Substance by it self, and divisible from all others.

And yet as absurd as this *Hypothesis* of *Spinosa* is, he was forced upon it, from the Insufficiency of the other *Hypothesis*, That tho' Sense and Reason be not Essential to Matter, yet Matter may (by the Various Configurations and Motions of its Parts) be improved into Sense, Reason, and Understanding; or which is all one, that Sense and Understanding are nothing

thing but the Motions of the finer and more ſpirituous parts of Matter in Organical Bodies.

I now come to ſhew the Unreaſonableneſs of that Suppoſition, That tho Senſe and Reaſon ſhould not be eſſential to Matter, yet Matter may by the various Configurations and Motions of its Parts, be improved into Senſe, Reaſon, and Underſtanding; or, which is all one, that Senſe and Underſtanding are nothing but the Motions of the finer and more ſpirituous Parts of Matter in Organical Bodies.

Now one Account that ſome Modern Corporealiſts give of this, is that advanced by Mr. *Hobbs*, That Senſe, Reaſon, and Underſtanding, are nothing but the Reaction of the Corpuſcles of the *Senſorium*, occaſioned by the Object.

By this Reaction I ſuppoſe can be meant nothing but the Reſiſtance that is made in the *Senſorium*, to the Impreſſions of the Object. But this is a very unſatisfactory, and indeed abſurd Account of the Matter. For,

Hence it will follow, that wherever there is Matter in Motion, there muſt be at leaſt Senſe if not Reaſon too;

too; for where-ever there is Action, there is ſome kind of Reaction or Reſiſtance.

Nor is there any Account to be given, why upon this Suppoſition the Objects of Senſe ſhould not themſelves have Senſe too; for the Reaction will be mutual, and conſequently by this Suppoſition the Senſe muſt be ſo too.

From this Suppoſition it likewiſe ſeems to follow, that where-ever there is the moſt violent Action, if there be a proportionable Re-action or Reſiſtance, there muſt be the quickeſt Senſe and Underſtanding; and ſo, for Inſtance, the Hammer and the Anvil muſt be the moſt ſenſible Things in Nature.

But that which is moſt conſiderable in this Caſe is this, that this Hypotheſis does not at all reach the Queſtion; it gives no account at all of thoſe Thoughts, thoſe Acts of Imagination, Remembrance, Reaſon, Judgment, and ſpontaneous Motion, that begin from within, and do not at all depend upon the Preſſure of external Objects, and therefore muſt depend upon and proceed from ſome internal Principle; which, whether it can be Matter or no,

no, we ſhall conſider more in the Sequel of this Diſcourſe.

So that I think I may diſmiſs this Hypotheſis, as that which appears abſurd at firſt View.

There are ſome late Authors that pretend to believe there is no ſuch thing as a thinking Subſtance in Man, diſtinct from the Body; but that Reaſon and Underſtanding is only an Emanation from Life.

They talk of a *Flammula Vitalis, the Spirit of Life, the Breath and Blood of our Lives, the glowing Particles of the Blood,* and ſuch other Cant; but give no tolerable Account of the Matter.

For we cannot but obſerve, the Acts of Senſe, Reaſon and Underſtanding are tranſacted in thoſe Parts of the Man that are moſt remote from the chief Vitals, the Heart and Lungs, and therefore ſeem to have little or no immediate Dependence on the *vital Breath, or the glowing Particles of the Blood.*

The Brain is of a cool and flaccid Subſtance, and the Animal Spirits, that may be thought the immediate Inſtruments of its Operations, ſeem not to be any ſuch *hot and glowing Particles*

ticles as these Authors speak of, but rather a fine liquid Juice percolated from the Blood into the nervous Substance, and which is requisite to keep the Brain in a due Temperature.

And therefore we find nothing so much disturbs the Brain in its Operations as too great a Quantity of these *hot and glowing Particles*, (that come either from acute Distempers, or from the drinking too much of hot and spirituous Liquors,) and dry up the native gentle moisture of the Brain and nervous Substance.

And if the Soul were such a *fiery flammeous Body* as some suppose it to be, it would be so far from acting by such Organs, that it would wholly destroy 'em, or at least unfit 'em for such Operations.

Besides, if the Acts of Reason and Understanding did immediately depend upon the Motion of the Blood and Spirits, without any higher Principle, those Thoughts and Acts of Reason that are supposed to be Emanations from 'em, must be always the same, or at least proceed in some certain determinate Course; and there must be the same Train of Thoughts and Reasonings

ſonings in all Men, or in the ſame Man at all Times.

For the Motion of the Blood and Spirits, and the Communications between the Vital and Animal Parts, are always (in healthful Perſons at leaſt) uniform, certain, and regular; and the ſame Cauſes, acting always alike, muſt have the ſame Effects.

So that upon this Suppoſition, a Man would be a meer Machine, or a finer piece of Clockwork.

But we find by Experience there is in us ſome voluntary ſelf-moving Principle; that we can think or not, think of this, or that, or the other thing; let our Thoughts ramble in a Moment from *London* to the *Eaſt* or *Weſt-Indies*, and our Imaginations can travel in a Minute from the North to the South Pole.

But it may be ſome may ſay, this internal Principle may be nothing but the Motion of the finer and more active and ſpirituous Parts of the Organs of the Animal.

Well, we will ſuppoſe this in ſome meaſure to be true, and that the ſeveral Motions of the Animal Spirits in the Organs, are the Inſtruments of the

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several sorts and degrees of Cogitation; still the Question will return; What is the true Original Cause that begins, guides, directs, and bounds that infinite Variety of the Motions of the Animal Spirits, in the several sorts and degrees of Cogitation, and the Representation of so vast a Variety of Objects to the Understanding?

Is it the Substance of the Brain? That (of it self) to all appearance is such a dull and senseless Thing, that a Lump of Curds, as a great Philosopher says well, may seem as capable of it, as a Lump of Brains.

Is it the Animal Spirits? These neither have any self-moving Principle in 'em, nor can move but as they are moved: Nor can any one Particle of 'em singly, nor any Combination of 'em, so determine their own Motions, as to be the Original Cause of Thought and Understanding in the Man.

There is no Mechanical and merely Material Cause we can have recourse to in this Matter, but the Circulation of the Blood; which being a Motion so constant, simple, and uniform, cannot be the genuine Cause of so many

Kinds, of ſo vaſt a Variety of Voluntary Motions, as muſt be ſuppoſed in the ſeveral ſorts of Cogitation, and the Spontaneous Motions of the Body; that partly occaſion'd by the Influence of External Objects upon the Senſes, and partly without any Dependance at all on them, muſt proceed from ſome Internal Spontaneous Principle of Action.

But to ſpeak a little more particularly of the ſeveral Acts that are commonly aſcribed to the Soul, and that the Corporealiſts would have us believe may be the Reſult of mere Organized Matter.

Imagination, as it ſignifies the common Senſe that is as it were the Treaſury of the Notices of the External Senſes, does in a great meaſure depend on the Organs.

But we find in our ſelves likewiſe a Power of actual Imagination, that is, not only of revolving and recollecting thoſe Images that are, upon the Notice of Senſe, or from former actual Imaginations treaſured up; but of compounding, dividing, variouſly diverſifying thoſe Images, nay, of forming

ing New ones of Things that (it may be) never were, or never will be.

Now this is that we may justly say is above the Power of Organized Matter, and must be ascribed to some Higher Principle.

Memory is another Faculty in Man: Tho' this, as it is the Treasury of the Mind, may depend in some measure upon the Organs; yet it is certain, that the Acts of Remembrance, or the Attention we give to those Images that are in this Treasury, must be ascribed to some Higher Principle, and cannot be supposed originally to proceed from any part of the Brain, or subtile Matter contained in it.

Judgment, or the Sentence we pass within our selves of the Truth or Falsehood of Things, according to those Notices we have, and those Ideas we form of 'em, by comparing our Ideas of 'em: This likewise is a Faculty above the Power of mere Matter.

This we can do, or suspend our doing of it, as we please. Now what is there in the Brain, or the Animal Spirits in it, to which this Power can be ascribed?

Again; Another Power in Man is, that which we properly call Reaſon; or the Deductions we make, and the Conſequences we draw of one Truth from another. Certainly, the Truth or Falſhood of Propoſitions, or of Conſequences, are not the Objects of Senſe, and are above the Power of the moſt ſubtile and ſpirituous Matter in the World.

Again; Self-reflection is another Power in Man. When we have exerciſed our Reaſon about any Objects, we can again recollect and revolve 'em in our mind, judge of, conſider, correct and amend; approve or reject theſe very Acts of our own Reaſon. This likewiſe (to all appearance) is above the Power of Organized Matter.

Again; Self-conſciouſneſs, or the intimate Knowledge we have of our own internal Actions and Cogitations, is (to all appearance) above the Power of Organized Matter. Nor (as far as we can judge) can any, the moſt ſubtile and fineſt Matter in the World, however mixed, modify'd and moved, any more be conſcious of its own Motions, than a Stone, or a Clod of Earth.

Self-

Self-enjoyment, or that Pleasure we take in reflecting upon our own Security and Happiness, or the certain Prospect we have of being so for the future, is another Property and Power in Man, that is above the Capacity of mere Matter, and must suppose some Higher Principle to be the Source and Fountain of it.

Again; That Power of Willing, or Nilling, or Suspending, and the Liberty we plainly by Experience find in our selves of Acting, or not Acting, is another Proof of some Higher Rational Principle, than mere Matter. For whatever Motions there are in Matter, tho' never so Casual, are yet (as to the Matter it self moved) necessary, and must depend upon some *Vis impressa* of some other Matter; till we come at last to some Being that has in it a self-moving Principle, which (to all appearance) no Part of Matter can have, and therefore is not capable of beginning any Spontaneous Motion.

Nay, even Sense it self, that seems (more than any of the forementioned Things) to depend upon Matter, if we consider it distinctly, will appear

impossible, without some Higher Principle than bare Matter.

For if we consider well, we shall find, that the Impression made by External Objects upon the *Sensorium*, is not properly what we ought to call Sense, but the Attention to, or Perception of that Impression, by that which is the true Principle of Sensation: And that Matter, however organized, can no more have Sense without some Higher Sentient, than the Soul can have such formal Sensations without the Organs of Sense.

And whether we determine with some, that the Objects of Sense are real Qualities; or with others, that they are only Appearances to our Faculties; 'tis the same thing. Still there must be something above mere Organized Matter, that must be affected by, attend to, really perceive and judge of, those real or apparent Qualities.

But that which most effectually shews the Absurdity of this *Hypothesis*, is this; That 'tis utterly impossible to give any tolerable Account of Spontaneous Motion, without supposing some Higher, and more Noble and

Pow-

Powerful Principle, than mere Matter.

'Tis plain, there is something in us (whatever it be) that has a Despotick Dominion over the Members of the Body, and that we can (within such a Sphere of Natural Power) move 'em when, and as we please: So that in this there is the same Difficulty, as there is in other Acts of Design or Understanding. Tho' the Impressions of Sense may be the Occasion of these Spontaneous Motions, it is impossible they should be the genuine and adequate Cause of 'em. It is impossible, the gentle Impressions that are made by External Objects upon our Senses, should by mere Mechanism force the several Members to exert their utmost Strength, as we see they often do.

Tho' the Impressions of Sense may be the Occasion, yet they can never be the Cause of the vast Variety of Spontaneous Motions of the Body, without the Intervention of some Higher Principle that judges of those Sensations, and directs the Locomotive Faculty in exerting its Strength and Vigor.

What Account can be given, why we ſhould not run as faſt from an Horſe, as from a Bear, (when the one as powerfully ſtrikes the Senſe as the other;) but the Intervention of ſome diſcerning Principle above Matter, however moved and modify'd, whereby we apprehend danger from the one, and not from the other?

So that it's plain, what we call the Soul, cannot be any Concretion of Atoms, as the *Epicureans* aſſert; for this (if the Atoms be never ſo fine) is ſtill but Body; and ſuch a Concretion of Atoms cannot be in an Organized Body, without Penetration of Dimenſions.

Nor can it be any *Flammula vitalis*; for we plainly ſee by Experience, there is nothing like any ſuch thing in a Body, when in Health and Vigor. The natural Heat of an Healthful Man is very gentle and moderate, and ſcarce diſcernible: But eſpecially the Brain, which by all is held to be the Inſtrument of Senſe and Underſtanding, is ſuch a moiſt and flaccid Subſtance, as has in it no appearance of any ſuch thing.

Nor can it be the Animal Spirits: For however they may be the Instruments of Perception, it is impossible they should have any such Innate Power of directing and determining themselves, in such a manner, as to produce such a vast Variety of Internal Actions in the Man, or Spontaneous Motions of the Body; or that the Impressions of Sense should by mere Mechanism be the Cause of such Inward Sensations and Cogitations, or such a vast Variety of Spontaneous Motions.

Some late Authors talk indeed of a Spirit of Life in Man, that they suppose is the Cause of Sense, Reason, and Understanding. If they mean only the finer and more active Parts of Organized Matter, I have already shew'd, it is impossible these should be the Primary Cause of Human Actions.

If we could think they mean any simple Essence distinct from the Body; the Dispute is at an end, and they allow what we call an Human Soul.

And

And then (I think) they ſpeak properly enough, to call it the *Spirit of Life*, that is, that Spirit that is the true Cauſe of Life.

And whereas they argue from the Word *Pſyche*, in *Greek* ſignifying both Soul and Life, that the Soul is nothing but the Life of the Animal; I think they ought to argue quite otherwiſe, that this is ſo, becauſe the Soul is in another Senſe the Life of the Animal, that is, the true Cauſe of the Life of it.

But perhaps it may be ſaid, we muſt not argue, that 'tis impoſſible that Matter ſhould have Senſe and Underſtanding, becauſe we cannot conceive how it can be: For Matter may have Properties that we know nothing of.

This is the laſt Refuge of the Corporealiſts.

But it is to be obſerved, we do not aſſert here only, that we cannot apprehend how Reaſon and Underſtanding can come from mere Matter; but we think we have Reaſon poſitively to aſſert it cannot be.

That the vaſt Variety of Motions, that muſt be ſuppoſed to all the Acts of Reaſon and Underſtanding, (ſuppoſing

posing they were nothing but Motion in Matter) cannot possibly proceed from the regular and uniform Motion of the Blood and Spirits in the Body.

That there is no Kind, or Part, or Particles of Matter in the Organized Body, that can possibly so determine themselves, as to be the Beginning of the Spontaneous Actions and Motions of the Man, (and especially of those that do not at all depend on the Impressions of the External Senses;) without some such Distinct, Internal, Spontaneous Principle, as we suppose the Soul to be.

Some may say, perhaps, What! Shall we say that God cannot give to Matter a Power of Thinking?

I confess, we should be very cautious how we say what God cannot do. And some late Corporealists that pretend to own a God, talk much of the Power of God in this Case; and that he can easily put Sense, and Reason, and Understanding, into mere Matter.

We confess, if these Gentlemen do really believe a God, *i. e.* an infinitely Powerful Spirit, distinct from Matter; the Question about Matter thinking

ing

ing or not thinking, would be of ſomething leſs Concernment.

But we cannot ſee then why they ſhould make it the grand Queſtion in Philoſophy, (or write grand Eſſays about it,) Whether Matter can think, or no? and bend their whole Strength to ridicule all the Ancient Philoſophy about Human Souls; and (by ſubtile Evaſions) wreſt thoſe Scriptures that ſo plainly ſpeak of the Soul as a Thing diſtinct from the Body; if there were not a Snake in the Graſs, ſome Deſign in the bottom of it.

And I think it not hard to gueſs what that may be. For if they can once perſwade the World, that Matter may think, they may not deſpair of perſwading it to drop the Notion of a God.

For the true Senſe of what they aſſert, when they ſay, God can put the Power of Thinking into Matter, muſt be this; That God can ſo modify Matter, as that it may become a thinking Subſtance, and yet be Matter ſtill.

From this the Atheiſt will eaſily draw this Conſequence; That Matter may (by the various Motions and Confi-

Configurations of its Parts) be improved into Sense, and Reason, and Understanding: Or (it may be) with *Spinosa* assert, That Cogitation as well as Extension, is an Essential Property of his One Substance, that is, of Matter.

But then if there be, as we believe there is, an essential difference between Mind and Matter, between Spirit and Body; if Thinking, to all appearance, be above the Power, and beyond the Capacity of mere Matter; I see no danger in asserting upon this Supposition, That God cannot put the Power of Thinking into Matter; any more than it would be to assert, That God cannot make a Body to be a Spirit while it is a Body, or a Spirit to be a Body while it is a Spirit.

Our Saviour tells the *Jews*, God was able of Stones to raise up Children to *Abraham*: But sure one might safely say, they could not be Stones and Children to *Abraham* at the same time.

If a Man should enquire, Whether God could put the Cold of Snow or Ice into the hottest Fire, and yet at the same time it should be as much

Fire

Fire as it was before; and should assert it might be done: He might as well, I think, assert, That it might be Fire and not Fire at the same time.

So that though there may be Ten thousand things possible to God, that we might think impossible, yet we must not, under pretence of ascribing Power to God, assert what will destroy the very Nature of Things, and the Being of Truth; unless we will with some of the Schoolmen assert, That God can make two contradictory Propositions both to be true.

In short; since Thought is the quickest thing in the World, if that be nothing but Motion, one would think those things that are hottest, and of the quickest Motion, should be nearest to Thought and Perception.

But we find, for instance, Fire has no more Sense or Understanding than Water; nor Water boil'd to the greatest degree of Heat, than cold Water; nor the most rectified, the strongest, and most exalted Spirits, than the dullest Phlegm; nor is a Red-hot Iron any nearer Thinking, than a Cold one.

Con-

Contrary to all this, we find the Brain, that as far as we can tell is the immediate Instrument of inward Sensations, and of Thought and Understanding, is of a clammy and unactive Nature and Substance; and seems, as far as we can judge of it, to be a mere passive Principle, as to the Acts of inward Sensation and Intellection.

And the Animal Spirits are not any hot and glowing Particles, nor at all of a fiery Nature, but rather a liquid Juice, of a watery Substance; and therefore there must be some active Principle distinct from Matter, that is the true Source and Original of those internal Acts of Reason and Understanding.

There is an Objection that I foresee will be made against our Assertion; That Sense it self cannot be supposed to be from mere Matter, but must require some higher Principle, distinct from Matter, that may perceive the Impressions made on the outward Senses by External Objects.

The Objection is this: That if we suppose Brutes to have Immaterial Souls, they must be Immortal too, or else we lose one main Argument for the

the Immortality of Human Souls, that which is commonly taken from their Immateriality.

It was, as we may probably think, to avoid this Difficulty, that *Carteſius* aſſerted Brutes to be mere Machines, and to have nothing either of Senſe or Underſtanding.

But by avoiding this, I doubt he ran himſelf upon a greater Abſurdity, to deny that to Brutes, that is plain and obvious to Experience; that they have not only Senſe, but ſomething of Knowledge and Reaſon too in their Sphere and Degree.

We are as ſure as can be of this, not only from the Likeneſs of their Organs to thoſe of Men, but from the Signs of Senſe they give, and the Actions they do, that they have Senſe, and ſomething of Knowledge and Reaſon too, or ſomething ſo like it, that we know not what elſe to call it.

We indeed give it another Name, and call it Inſtinct; and ſo with reſpect to God the Giver of it, we may (if we pleaſe) call Human Reaſon too.

But

But if we shall assert, there is nothing but Mechanism in Brutes, when many of 'em have quicker Sense than we, and in some things in their Sphere they act with as much Sagacity as our selves; I say, if we assert this, we shall find it hard to defend our selves against the Atheist, if he shall take the Boldness to assert, That Man may be only a finer and more curious Piece of Mechanism.

As to the forementioned Objection against this, I confess, the Immateriality of Human Souls has been actually brought as a certain Argument of their Immortality, and that even by those that did not suppose the Brutes to be mere Machines.

And so far the Argument will certainly hold; That what is Immaterial, (such a simple Essence as we suppose the Soul to be) has not in it self the Principles of Corruption, as Bodies have, and consequently is fit in its Nature to be Immortal.

But as whatever received its Being from God, must depend upon his Good Will and Pleasure for the Continuance of it; and the Highest Angel in Heaven (as to his Immortal Duration)

as much depends on God, as the Soul of the meaneſt Man on Earth; ſo we may ſuppoſe God to be guided by Infinite Wiſdom, in giving this Immortality. And that which ſeems in Conjunction with their Immateriality to determine and prove the Immortality of Human Souls, is, that Superior Degree of Reaſon they have, whereby they are capable of Knowing God, and their Duty and Obligations to him, and of having a Senſe of Moral Good and Evil; and, by conſequence, of being accountable to God, the Great Governor and Judge of all the World, and of Receiving Rewards, and Suffering Puniſhments in another Life.

And ſeeing the common Senſe of all Men is, That God hath eſtabliſhed a Law for Mankind; it may well be expected he ſhould call 'em to account, and reward their Obedience, and puniſh their Diſobedience to it.

And ſeeing this is not generally and exactly done in this Life, 'tis highly probable (even to Reaſon it ſelf) it will be in another, and that the Soul is immortal.

And being it is clear, the Brutes have none of them Knowledge or Reason in this degree, nor in these Things, nor any Capacity of understanding their Obligations to God, nor any Sense of him, or their Duty to him, (and consequently are not capable of any Account in an After-state;) there is not the same Reason to believe their Spirits are immortal, (however capable they may be of it, by their being immaterial,) as there is for those of Mankind.

Nor is it reasonable to expect we should determine what God does with them; that we neither do, nor perhaps can know any thing of.

The Words of *Solomon*, *Eccl.* 3. 21. may teach us Modesty in this Case: *Who knoweth*, saith he, *the Spirit of man that goeth upwards, and the Spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?* Where he seems (tho' he intimates, we know little of these Things) by the *Spirit of man's going upward*, to intend a future immortal State. *Then shall the Spirit* (as he says elsewhere) *return to God who gave it.*

But whether he means, by the Spirit of the *beasts* going *downward*, An-

nihilation, or ſomething elſe; 'tis not much material to determine.

Whatever Difficulties there may be in this Suppoſition, I think they are much leſs than thoſe plain Abſurdities even to common Senſe and Experience, when we ſuppoſe Brutes to be mere Machines, and to have nothing in them, either of Knowledge and Reaſon, or indeed of Senſe it ſelf.

I hope, this Diſcourſe of a Spiritual Subſtance, or Soul in Man, will not be thought a Digreſſion; for indeed it is ſo near a-kin to the Subject I am upon, and ſo almoſt neceſſary, as part of an Anſwer to the Objections made againſt the Being of Spirit, (or Mind) and Immaterial Subſtance in general, that I could not prevail with my ſelf to omit it.

And thus I have ſaid ſomething (as briefly as I could) by way of Anſwer to that bold Aſſertion of Atheiſtical People, That all the *Phænomena* of Human Nature, and all thoſe Noble Acts that are commonly aſcribed to the Soul in Man, may be accounted for by the mere Motion of the finer Parts of Matter, in the ſeveral Organs of the Body: And conſequently,

That

That Matter is capable (say they) by the several Motions and Configurations of its Parts, to be improved into a Capacity of Sense, and Reason, and Understanding.

I now come to speak briefly of some Objections, that are made against the Being of a God, with respect to this Attribute of Knowledge.

And first; They object, there can be no Knowledge, without the Organs of Sense and Knowledge: That is, *Flesh, Blood, and Brains*, as Mr. *Hobbs* boldly asserts. And that all Knowledge is but Sense, or at least is grounded in it; and therefore there can be no God, because we suppose him to be a Knowing Being, and yet not to have the Instruments of Knowledge.

But this is but a weak Objection, For,

1. This Knowledge by Sense, is, as we have Reason to believe, a weak and imperfect Way of Knowledge, and perhaps the meanest that deserves to be called by that Name; and acquaints us only with the Surface of Things, and does not throughly let us into the Nature of 'em.

And I think we may well reaſon juſt the contrary way; That ſince we, by all the Notices that we can get by Senſe, and our Reaſoning upon it, know ſo little of the true and intimate Nature of Things; there is ſome other more Noble Being, that by ſome more perfect way knows Things as they are in themſelves, as the Scripture aſſerts of God; *Known unto God are all his works, from the foundation of the world.*

And as to what they ſay, That Senſe is the only Knowledge, and that we know nothing, but what we know by Senſe; 'tis manifeſtly falſe. For then, he that ſees, or feels, or taſtes a thing *ipſo facto*, knows all that is to be known of it. And beſides, Experience tells us, we can form Notions, and have Knowledge of Things, that have little or no Dependance upon Senſe.

And whereas they ſay, All Knowledge is but Paſſion, or the Impreſſion of the Object upon the Knowing Faculty, Senſe, or Imagination; this likewiſe is againſt Experience; there being a great many Acts of the Underſtanding that begin from within,

and

and do not at all depend upon the Impressions of Sense: And we can have Ideas of Things that are not the Objects of any of our Senses.

And whereas they further tell us, That there are but Five Senses, and there can be neither more nor less; and that these are all the Means and Ways of Knowledge: This is neither true, nor to the purpose.

For he that gave us these Senses, could have given us more, or fewer, even external Ways of Notice. Nor are we to judge of the Possibility of Knowledge in the most Perfect Being, by the narrow Scantling of our own imperfect Ways of Understanding.

And it is highly probable, we shall arrive at an higher and more perfect Knowledge, when we are divested of these Earthly Bodies.

So that our Knowledge, and the Ways of arriving at it, seem to be suited to our present State; and those Senses that we here are so affected with, and keep such a stir about, in the State they now are, seem rather to clogg and hinder, than to promote and further the Native Capacities of

our Souls, with reſpect to any clear and perfect Knowledge of Things.

And whereas they further object, That Things are before Knowledge, and not Knowledge before the Things known; neither is that univerſally true.

We have Reaſon to aſſert, Whatſoever is poſſible to be, or to be done, is poſſible to be known; and that whatever actually is, or is done, is actually known by ſome Being or other.

And from hence it follows, there is ſome All-knowing Being, and ſuch a Being is that we call God.

Now, as we have all the Reaſon in the World to believe that all Things were made by ſuch a Being, ſo we are ſure he muſt have a perfect Knowledge of 'em, before he could make 'em.

For it muſt be in Natural, as it is in Artificial Things; he that is now to build an Houſe, may take his Model, and frame his Idea of it from ſome other Houſe that is built before: But he that built the firſt Houſe, muſt form the Plan and Model of it from his own Underſtanding. So it is here.

God,

God, the Great Architect of the World, must know it, before he made it.

I might have been more large in answering these last Objections, but my designed Brevity would not give me leave; and they do not seem to be of any great Weight and Moment: And therefore I shall pass on to some other Objections.

Another Objection that is brought by some Atheistical Persons against the Being of a God, is, against his Wisdom, so far as it may appear in the Creation of the World.

Certainly, say they, if the World had been made by a God, it would have been made much better than it is. We should not have so many vile and mean, so many useless and unprofitable, so many noxious Creatures as are in the World, as it now is. To which I answer,

1. That when in the greater Instances of Created Beings, we find such plain Footsteps of Infinite Wisdom as may fully convince us there is a God; methinks we should rather argue the other way; That since 'tis so plain the World was made by Infinite Wisdom, there-

therefore it could not well be made better (all Things consider'd) than it is; and that those supposed Defects or Faults that are found in it, are not in the Things themselves, but in our Apprehension; and that 'tis our Ignorance that betrays us to think so of 'em.

And ('tis plain) this may be the Case. For

To make a right Judgment of the Wisdom of God in the Making of the World, we must not have regard to our private Interests, or selfish Passions, but to the Good of the whole.

And as to Mankind particularly, we must consider 'em not only with respect to the present, but the future: And if we would make a right Judgment in this Case, it would require one comprehensive View of the Divine Providence, and the comparing one Thing with another, and Things present with all those that are to come, both in this Life, and in another.

For, as it is in Reason of State, private Men that cannot be let into the Knowledge of it, cannot make a Judgment of the Wisdom of it; so it is much more true of the Secrets and Mysteries of Creation and Providence.

Those

Thoſe Things may be great and momentous, that we think mean and inconſiderable; thoſe Things highly uſeful and neceſſary one way or other, that we think needleſs and uſeleſs: Thoſe Creatures that we think only noxious and dangerous, may (upon ſome account or other that we know nothing of,) be highly neceſſary, and greatly beneficial to the World.

So that all that this Objection proves, is this; That we cannot dive into the Myſteries of the Wiſdom of God in the Creation of the World: And ſince there is ſo much of Wiſdom ſo plainly viſible in it, we ſhould (methinks) have the Modeſty to think, there may be Wiſdom that we cannot underſtand.

As a good Subject, that plainly ſees by the Tenour of his Government, that his Prince is a Wiſe Governor, will not preſently conclude thoſe Actions fooliſh and impolitick that he does not ſee the Reaſon of.

And therefore it was bold Blaſphemy in one of the Kings of *Arragon*, who ſaid he could have told God how he might have mended ſeveral things in the making of the World.

There

There are indeed ſeveral things the Atheiſts inſtance in as Faults and Imperfections in the Make of this World; but they are not worth the mentioning; tho a fair Account might be given of all or moſt of 'em.

For we do or can know ſo little of the Nature of Things in themſelves, or of the Relation they bear to one another, or to the Univerſe; much leſs of the whole Scheme of the Wiſdom and Providence of the Great Creator, in the making and governing of the World, that a moderate Senſe of this will ſilence all ſuch Objections, that have indeed no ground, but in our own Ignorance of Things.

The next Objections I ſhall mention, are ſuch as ſeem to reflect on the Juſtice or Goodneſs of God.

All that own a God, an infinitely Perfect Being, muſt own theſe and the like Moral Perfections are as eſſential to him, as any other Attributes.

The great Objection the Atheiſt makes againſt the Being of a God, as to this Point, is taken from the manifold Evils, and the great Confuſions of this World.

Now as there is a Twofold sort of Evil, that of Sin, and that of Suffering; so if we can give a good Account of God's permitting the one, we shall be able to give an easier and better Account of the other.

But because these Atheists we have to deal with, destroy the Supposition, and take away the very Question concerning God's permitting Sin or Moral Evil, by asserting there is no such thing as Liberty, nothing but absolute and immutable Necessity in the World, (which in the true Consequence of it is to assert there is no such thing as Moral Good or Evil;) before I enter upon that Objection, I must say something of Necessity and Liberty.

In the first place, let us see what these Gentlemen think of this matter. *Spinosa* supposes God himself to do whatever lies in his Power, from an absolute Necessity of his Nature. That from this all things are and must be just as they are, and could be no otherwise. That Things could be made after no other Manner, and in no other Order, than they were made. And to say the contrary, is with him as absurd, as to talk of a Triangle whose

Three

Three Angles are not equal to Two right ones.

Mr. *Hobbs* likewiſe in ſeveral places of his Works, ſpeaks to this purpoſe. That no Man can be free from Neceſſitation. That voluntary Actions have all of them neceſſary Cauſes. Nay, as to the Deity himſelf, we may obſerve he denies him any Knowledge or Underſtanding; aſſerts him to be without any Ends or Deſigns in his Actions and Operations.

So that the true Conſequence of theſe Gentlemens Opinion is, That there is no difference between Voluntary and Natural Agents; between a Man, and a Stock or a Stone; and that thoſe Beings the World have thought to be free and voluntary Agents, and to have a Principle of acting or ſuſpending their Actions within themſelves, make all their Motions with the ſame Neceſſity, and with as little Choice, as a Stone falls downward, or an Arrow ſhot out of a Bow moves forward.

This is the juſt Conſequence of what they aſſert in their Writings: And to aſſert, as they in effect do, That every Thing that ever was or is,

and

and every Action that ever was done, together with every Mode and Circumstance of Being or Action, was of absolute Necessity just as it is, and could not possibly be otherwise, is methinks at first View, to any Man of common Sense, so absurd an Opinion, that it deserves rather to be laugh'd at than confuted. And yet this is what these Gentlemen assert sometimes in little less than express Terms, and at other times in the true Consequence of what they say.

I confess, these Gentlemen sometimes talk of Liberty, as they do sometimes of a God, like other People: Whether they do it with design a little to bring themselves off as to their wild Assertions, or whether sometimes Truth slips from 'em before they are aware, I cannot say; but the main Drift of their Discourses are as I have before described 'em. As to the Liberty of Human Actions, that there is no absolute Necessity in all of them, I may leave every one of you to prove it to your selves: And there is never a Man in the World, but can effectually confute *Hobbs* and *Spinosa* for himself, tho perhaps he may not be able to answer all their Cavils. As

As the old Philoſopher, when there was one that was ſo impertinently bold, as to deny there could be any ſuch thing as Motion, (juſt as theſe Gentlemen do there can be any Liberty,) thought the beſt way of confuting him, was to get up and walk before him.

So let any of us ſhut our Eyes, and put our ſelves as much as may be from under the Influence of our Senſes, and try whether we muſt not be conſcious to our ſelves, that we can make a Thouſand Spontaneous Motions, and think of as many Things, how, or when, or as we pleaſe. And that, for inſtance, when we riſe up, we might if we pleaſe ſit ſtill; and when we walk this Way, we might as well have walked the contrary Way. When we think of the *Exchange* or St. *Paul's* at *London*, we might as well if we pleaſed have thought of that at *Amſterdam* or St. *Peters* at *Rome*. Let any of the Admirers of *Hobbs* or *Spinoſa* tell us if they can, the *Neceſſary Cauſes* of theſe and ſuch like *Voluntary Actions*. Or ſay in good earneſt if they dare, that we could not in the moſt minute Circumſtance, or Mode of Thought or Action,

Action, do any otherwise, than just as we do.

And as to what *Spinosa* says of his God, he is guilty of so many and so gross Absurdities, that one might justly wonder any Man can have the Confidence to assert such Things, unless he designed to banter Mankind.

He tells us, There is but One Substance; and that there is no Substance but God; and that Cogitation is an Essential Property of this Substance: And yet, when he denies any such thing as Liberty to his God, and makes him a Being that acts to the utmost of his Power *ex necessitate Naturæ*; he (in effect) denies he has any Cogitation, Apprehension, or Understanding at all.

For where-ever there is Apprehension and Understanding, there must be in proportion Spontaneity and Liberty; the one being a necessary Consequence of the other.

When he denies Liberty to God, he makes him an imperfect Being: For certainly a Being that has Understanding, is more perfect than one that has not; and a Being that has Election and Liberty, much more noble than

one that acts from an abſolute Neceſſity, and can do no otherwiſe.

Again: What he ſuppoſes concerning God, (in the juſt Conſequence of it) ſuppoſes him not to act at all; but rather to be merely paſſive, and to act only as he is acted upon; or with ſuch a blind *Impetus*, as may be in the meaneſt Being in the whole World.

And whereas *Spinoſa* ſays, If we ſuppoſe any thing could have been otherwiſe than as it is, it will follow, that the Nature of God might have been other than what it is:

This is a plain Fallacy, for want of diſtinguiſhing an abſolute Neceſſity of Nature, from an abſolute Neceſſity of Acting.

There are in God Two ſorts of Neceſſity.

A Neceſſity of Nature; by which he muſt be abſolutely perfect, and can be no otherwiſe: And a Neceſſity of Exiſtence; He Is, and cannot but Be.

And as to his Actions, there follows (from the neceſſary Perfection of his Nature) a Neceſſity that what he does, ſhould not be diſagreeable to his Infinite Perfection.

But

But to aſſert he lies under a Neceſſity of Nature to do all he can do; or that he could not do any thing otherwiſe than he does; are Aſſertions that ſo intrench upon the Liberty and Sovereignty of God, that no Man that has any right Notion of God, can aſſert or defend 'em. This muſt infer, that God ſhould make every day a new World, and deſtroy it when he has done.

But there is no danger of this; for alas, *Spinoſa* means no ſuch thing by his God.

For 'tis plain, by laying what he in ſeveral Places ſays of God together, he can mean nothing by God but the Univerſe, or the vaſt infinitely extended Bulk of Matter.

And, by Cogitation, he can hardly mean any thing but Local Motion.

And when he aſcribes Omnipotence to his God, he can mean only ſome ſuch thing as the Philoſophers call *Potentia materiæ*, the Power of Matter.

And his *Neceſſitas divinæ naturæ*, the Neceſſity of the Divine Nature, is but the ſame with *Epicurus*'s Caſual Motion of the Atoms, or Parts

of Matter; which (as they are ſuppoſed not to be guided by any Rational Agent,) may be ſaid to be Caſual, as they depend upon the Motions of ſome other Parts of Matter; (according to that Suppoſition of *Spinoſa*, Whatſoever is moved, is moved by ſome other thing, and that by another, and ſo on without end;) I ſay, upon that account they may be ſtiled neceſſary.

So that what *Spinoſa* ſays, that *Ex neceſſitate divinæ naturæ, infinita infinitis modis ſequi debent*, is ſo far from being true, that no Regular Frame of Things (neither this that now is, nor any other,) could ever follow from the Neceſſary or Caſual Motions (call 'em which you will) of the Parts of Matter; without being begun and carried on regularly by ſome Being that hath Underſtanding and Liberty, Power and Wiſdom, in the higheſt Perfection, ſuch as we ſuppoſe God to be.

Now as this Suppoſition of *Hobbs* and *Spinoſa* (That there is nothing but abſolute Neceſſity, no ſuch thing as Liberty in the World;) is abſurd in the Nature of the thing, ſo it is of

moſt

moſt pernicious Conſequence to Religion; which, upon this Suppoſition, muſt be quite baniſh'd out of the World.

For certainly, ſuch a God as *Hobbs* and *Spinoſa* deſcribe, cannot be the Object of our Worſhip or Obedience.

For if he made us, and could not help it; he preſerves us too, and cannot help it; and (it may be) muſt reward us, or (as it happens from the Neceſſity of his Nature) puniſh us, and cannot help it: In this Caſe, what are we beholden to him? or what Duty can we owe or pay to him? Eſpecially, when according to what they ſometimes ſay, He cannot know whether he did theſe Things for us or no.

And the Caſe is the ſame with reſpect to our ſelves: If we have no ſuch thing as Liberty, and do every thing we do from abſolute and immutable Neceſſity; either we can have no Reaſon or Religion, or 'tis utterly to no purpoſe.

Having premiſed theſe Things concerning that abſurd *Hypotheſis* of our modern Atheiſts, whereby they diſcard all Liberty, and aſcribe all Things and

Actions to an Abſolute Neceſſity; I come now to ſay ſomething of the Objection made againſt the Being of God, from a ſuppoſed Defect of Goodneſs, in his permitting Sin (or Moral Evil) in the World.

The Sum of what they ſay as to this Matter, is this; If God can, and will not, hinder Sin, it cannot be reconciled with that infinite Goodneſs we aſcribe to him.

In anſwer to this; Firſt, I believe none will deny but it is more for the Honour of God to make a Free Creature, one that hath Underſtanding and Liberty, than to make only ſuch as are carried by a blind and fatal Neceſſity of Nature in all their Actings. 'Tis a greater Demonſtration of Power and Wiſdom, nay, and Goodneſs too in God, than the other could be.

We may ask any of theſe Gentlemen, Whether they would rather have been Stocks or Stones than Men?

Nay, if God had made no Rational Creatures, he would have had no Honour at all by the Work of Creation, when there was no Creature that could

could know and admire the Beauty and Order of it.

And as 'tis more for the Honour of God that there ſhould be Free and Rational Creatures, ſo it plainly makes for the Perfection of the World, and the Beauty of the Univerſe, that there ſhould be ſuch Creatures. And if there had been none ſuch, the World would have been but a few Removes from the Original *Chaos*, or a dead and ſenſeleſs Lump and Maſs of Matter.

And as to the more or leſs Perfection of the ſeveral Creatures, there is a great Beauty in the Order and ſeveral Degrees of it. Will any ſay, the World is not much better as it is, than if God had made all the Stones Diamonds, or all the Flowers Tulips or Lillies, or all the Trees Cedars?

But theſe Gentlemen cannot reconcile the Defectibility of Rational Creatures, with the Goodneſs of God.

Methinks, it is eaſy to diſtinguiſh between a Neceſſity and Poſſibility of Sinning.

It ſeems no more neceſſary, that God ſhould put all Rational Agents above the Poſſibility of Sinning, than

that he ſhould put all Matter above the Power of Corruption.

God is not at all obliged to impart the utmoſt Extent of his Goodneſs to any Creature, nor an equal Degree and Meaſure of it to all.

As I have ſaid before, his Attributes are as it were bounded and limited by one another; and ſo the Extent of his Goodneſs is bounded by his Wiſdom, and the reſt of his Glorious Perfections.

Many Attributes in God, and many Virtues in Men, appear more glorious than they could have done, if all Rational Creatures had been created in an indefectible State.

'Tis enough in this Caſe, that God does not lay his Rational Creatures under a Neceſſity of Sinning, tho' he does not do all he can by his abſolute Power to over-rule their Free Wills to that which is Good; no more than he ſtops the Force of Fire and Water, when apply'd to Miſchievous Purpoſes.

'Tis ſufficient that he deals with 'em as Rational Creatures; gives 'em a Senſe of Good and Evil, and at leaſt a general Senſe and Apprehenſion of his

his Juſtice and Mercy, if not to all the ſpecial Revelations of his Will.

That he puts 'em in a Capacity of a greater Happineſs, upon the good Uſe of their Reaſon and Liberty, than that of a State of mere Nature. And that he will expect no more from 'em, than according to what he gives to 'em; he will not expect Ten Talents, where he gives but One.

That when he comes to judge the World, he will proceed according to the Rules of Equity, Juſtice, and Goodneſs. They that have had only the Law of Nature, ſhall be judged only by that; and only they that have had the Goſpel, are to anſwer for the Neglect and Abuſe of it.

And this is likewiſe Anſwer enough to that other Objection the Atheiſt makes againſt the Being of God, from a ſuppoſed Defect of his Goodneſs; That he has let ſo great a Part of the World lye in groſs Ignorance of the Means of their Happineſs: He will one day make it appear he does no wrong, nay, that he has been Good and Kind to all Mankind.

But

But the Atheiſt ſtill objects againſt the Providence, and on that account againſt the Being of God, from the unequal Diſtribution of Rewards and Puniſhments in this World. He ſays, there is not a ſufficient Diſtinction made between Good and Bad Men, which there ought to be, and would be if there were a God.

Now, in anſwer to this Objection, there are theſe Things fit to be conſider'd.

That it muſt be confeſs'd, the Good and Bad are not ſo clearly diſtinguiſh'd here by their proſperous or adverſe Condition, as that we may venture to ſay, This is a Good, or that a Bad Man, from any outward Diſpenſations; where we cannot judge of them by the Tenour of their Lives and Actions. *Solomon* obſerves, No man knows the Love or Hatred of God, by all that is before him.

It muſt be confeſs'd likewiſe, that this has been an Objection that has not only been made by Atheiſtical People, but (as appears from Scripture) has puzzled ſome very Good Men too. When *David* ſaw the Wicked in great Proſperity, while he himſelf

ſelf and ſome other Good Men were under ſevere Trials and Chaſtiſements, at firſt he was ready to ſay, *Then have I cleanſed my heart in vain, and waſhed my hands in innocency.* But when he conſider'd the different Ends of theſe Two ſorts of Men, (very often here, and certainly hereafter,) he ſoon recover'd himſelf from this doubting Deſpondency in the Providence of God.

Alas, we reaſon wrong as to this Caſe in abundance of Things.

We are very often miſtaken in the Men we count Good or Bad. Some Men that make a fair Show of Religion, may be indeed very Bad Men, and may be ſecretly guilty of very Enormous Vices. And on the contrary, ſome Men, that we (through Prejudice, or becauſe it may be they do not agree with us in ſome nice Opinions,) judge to be Bad Men, may in the main be Good Men before God.

Again; We often miſtake the Nature of Proſperity and Adverſity: We judge of it only (it may be) with reſpect to this preſent State, or with reſpect to the more or leſs Abundance Men have of this World. Whereas it ought

ought to be judged of, rather by the Relation it has to the most Momentous Concerns of a future State, or at least with respect to the more or less true Enjoyment Men have of what they possess in this World.

And therefore we often judge amiss of the prosperous or adverse Estate of other Men: We see (it may be) the fair Outside of their Fortunes, but we know little of their Cares and Fears. They are Rich and Great, and thence we conclude they must needs be Happy and Prosperous. Whereas, the very little that some Good Men we overlook and count unfortunate do possess, may (as to real Enjoyment and Satisfaction) be much better than the great Riches and Power of such Ungodly Men.

However, let 'em possess and enjoy too as much of the World as they will, if their Prosperity in this World be (through their Abuse of it) an Occasion of their Misery in the next, they are not much to be envy'd for their Pomp and Grandeur in this World. Nay indeed, if they go on obstinately in their Wicked Courses, they are rather

rather to be pity'd as a moſt Wretched ſort of People.

From hence it eaſily follows, that God may make a greater Diſtinction between Good and Bad Men, even in this World, than we are aware of; and make ſome Good Men really proſperous, and ſome Bad Men really wretched and unhappy, tho' we know it not.

But it is further to be conſider'd, That tho' God do not generally in this World make a viſible Difference between Good and Bad Men as to outward Proſperity, yet he very often appears in ſo extraordinary a manner, in protecting, ſupplying, rewarding the one, and in puniſhing the other, even in this Life, as is ſufficient to vindicate his Providence, as to this Matter.

But let us ſuppoſe the utmoſt the Atheiſt can object in this Caſe; That the Wicked not only Live, but Dye in the greateſt Worldly Proſperity; yet as long as he that believes a Juſt God, muſt believe that probably there will be another State, this will eaſily account for the Diſpenſations of God's Providence in this World, when God may

may (in that future Life) make an ample Amends to Good Men for all their Sufferings here; and take a ſtrict and ſevere Account of the Actions of Wicked Men, however they might poſſibly eſcape Puniſhment in this preſent State.

And indeed the various Diſpenſations of Rewards and Puniſhments to Good and Bad Men in this Life, is a very good Argument that there will be a future State, when God will make a true and final Difference between Good and Bad Men; but if rightly conſider'd, it is no Argument at all againſt the Providence and Being of God.

But there are ſome other Things that are objected againſt the Providence and Being of God.

As, that ſuch a Providence as we aſcribe to God, is utterly impoſſible; or if not, that 'tis below God, and inconſiſtent with his Happineſs, to take care of ſo many, and ſuch little Things.

As to the firſt; That 'tis impoſſible for any Being to attend to ſuch an infinite Variety of Things at once: This

is

is to meaſure God by our ſelves. We can no more judge of his Knowledge and Underſtanding by ours, than we can of his Power by our own, which is but mere Impotency.

If I do not miſ-remember, ſome Authors tell us, *Julius Cæſar* was able to dictate to Seven *Amanuenſes* at once; which, if we were to judge by the common Capacity of other Men, we ſhould think impoſſible.

'Tis no harder to believe that God governs and diſpoſes all Things, now the Order of Nature is ſettled, than that he made 'em before that was done.

But, ſay they, 'tis below God to take care of ſuch minute and little Things:

Non vacat exiguis rebus adeſſe Jovi.

Well, this is ſtill to argue, as if God were like to Men.

'Tis below the Dignity of a King to be troubled with little and minute Affairs, becauſe it is impoſſible for him to attend to 'em: But with God the Caſe is otherwiſe; 'tis as eaſy for him to take a Providential Care of all Things,

Things, as it is for us to take care of One Thing.

Thoſe we call little Things, as they are Part of the Creation, and make up the Beauty, Harmony, and Order of it, are Great Things; and therefore however minute in themſelves, 'tis no more below God to Order and Govern them by his Providence, than it was to make 'em by his Power.

But would not this Providence of God be inconſiſtent with his Happineſs?

Not at all; for ſtill we ought not to judge of him by our ſelves. He knows all Things knowable, and can do all Things poſſible with the greateſt Eaſe and Pleaſure.

Indeed, Reaſon tells us, That all Things poſſible are equally eaſy to a Proportionate Power. A ſtrong Man can as eaſily lift an Hundred Pound Weight, as a weak Child can Ten. An able Mathematician ſees as clearly ſome of the moſt abſtruſe Demonſtrations, as a vulgar Underſtanding does the moſt obvious Truths.

Now let us apply this to the Caſe before us, and we ſhall ſee the Providence of God will appear ſo far from being

being uneaſy, diſtracting, and cumberſome to him, or any way deſtructive of his Happineſs; that it muſt be eaſy, pleaſant, and delightful.

And if we might (as theſe Men do) argue from what we find in our ſelves, ſo as to aſſert any thing concerning God, it would be quite the contrary. As we find, to Men of Active Natures and Tempers Idleneſs is the greateſt Burthen, and to be active in their Sphere the greateſt Pleaſure; ſo to God, who (if we may ſpeak with the Schools) is a *Purè Act*, the univerſal Extent of his Providence is one Part of the Perfection of his Happineſs.

And thus I have propoſed ſome Arguments to prove the Exiſtence of a God, and anſwer'd ſome of thoſe Objections that are commonly brought againſt it.

I confeſs, there are many other Arguments, that are made uſe of by ſome very Learned Men for the Proof of it; I deny not, but when repreſented in their full ſtrength they may be concluſive.

But I have (to the beſt of my Judgment) made choice of thoſe Arguments that have been moſt generally uſed and approved by Learned Men, eſpecially ſuch of 'em as ſeem to lye more level with the Capacities of Ordinary Readers, for whoſe Benefit eſpecially theſe plain Diſcourſes are deſign'd.

And I have alſo choſe to anſwer thoſe Objections chiefly, that (among many others that might have been mention'd) ſeem to have moſt Weight in them.

As to thoſe Men that are ſunk ſo deep into Senſe, or are ſo buſy'd with or even bury'd in the Cares of this World, that they ſeem to be but a better ſort of Brutes in the Shape of Men, they never conſider whether there be a God, or not; ſuch Diſcourſes are wholly loſt upon them, they never read or think of 'em.

For, thoſe that openly profeſs Impiety, and have given themſelves up to work all Uncleanneſs with Greedineſs; if they have (as it often happens) a Tangue of Atheiſm, it is moſtly rather becauſe they wiſh there were no God, than that they think there is none; and they run to Atheiſm as a Re-

Refuge, becauſe they cannot be eaſy under the Apprehenſions of a God.

All the Avenues to theſe Mens Judgments are ſtopt by their corrupt Affections, and their violent and unruly Luſts.

Thoſe that pretend to be Atheiſts, or Scepticks upon Principle, that read and think themſelves into Speculative Atheiſm, we may obſerve yet are generally a ſort of People that have a mighty Opinion of themſelves, ſet an high Value upon their own Reaſon, Learning, and Philoſophy; talk much of the Ignorance and Prejudices of other People; run down the Syſtematick Divines; in ſhort, talk at ſuch a rate, as if Philoſophy, and Wiſdom, and Knowledge had begun to live, and were to dye with them: And yet after all this vain Boaſt of Science and Demonſtration, in many Things advance ſuch precarious Aſſertions for Principles, and ſuch Shadows of Reaſon for Demonſtrations, that one would be apt to think they had a mind to inſult the Reaſon of Mankind.

He that carefully reads *Hobbs* and *Spinoſa*, and ſome other later Writers, I believe, will think I am not much out in what I ſay of 'em.

I doubt, theſe Men think themſelves in too high a Claſs of Reaſon and Philoſophy, to be wrought upon by any thing that I can ſay to 'em.

But there are Two Things I cannot but tell them upon this Occaſion.

1. That their way of Writing is very unfair, and unlike (what they pretend to be) great Philoſophers.

We may obſerve, the general Way of almoſt all our modern Scepticks, is, that of Inſinuation:

They in their Writings talk of God and Religion, and Chriſtianity too, like other People; while in the mean time they advance ſuch Aſſertions and Reaſonings, as undermine the Foundation not only of Revealed, but Natural Religion, and the Belief of the Being of a God.

If they were generous Adverſaries, or ſuch as would make the World think they intended to carry their Point by Dint of Reaſon and Philoſophy, they would write at another rate;

rate; they would modeſtly ſignify their Doubts as to theſe Things, and fairly repreſent their Reaſons for it, and be willing patiently to hear what can be ſaid againſt them: And they would ſcorn ſuch Arts of wheedling their weaker and more unwary ſort of Readers.

In ſhort, thoſe Arts of Inſinuation that plainly appear in their Writings, are as much below the Character of Good Men, as Good Philoſophers, and Good Chriſtians.

2. There is another thing that cannot be juſtify'd by any Men of ſober Senſe, and which yet too many of their Writers and their Proſelytes and Abettors are groſly guilty of; and that is, their Scoffing at Religion, and making the Belief of thoſe Things that concern it, the Subjects of their Ridicule and Railery.

Sure, the Arguments that are brought againſt their Scepticiſm and Infidelity, are not ſo weak and contemptible as to deſerve to be laugh'd out of Countenance, and to be made a Jeſt of, and the Sport of Converſation. Nor do they pretend to ſuch

Demonſtration on their ſide, as ſhould make it a ridiculous thing to oppoſe 'em.

I doubt it is rather a Sign the Cauſe and the Men too are not very good, when ſuch Methods are pitch'd upon for the Defence of 'em.

But to add ſomething farther.

'Tis a very uncomfortable State theſe Men leave the World in, when they ſuppoſe all Things to be carried on by a blind Chance, or fatal Neceſſity, without the Providence and Government of God.

1. The very Thoughts of this muſt make Men uneaſy, and full of Fear and Horror; like Men in a Storm, toſs'd upon the Waves of a Rolling Sea, without hope of any Harbour.

And the Atheiſts themſelves are great Inſtances of this; no Men generally more ſubject to terrible Fears than they. Whether it be, that their Mind miſgives them ſometimes that there may be a God, and that they have Reaſon to dread his Vengeance, whoſe Providence and Being they have diſcarded: Or whether it be in part the Natural Conſequence of that uncertain and uncomfortable State that Man

Man muſt needs be in, that believes there is nothing but blind Fortune, or fatal Neceſſity in the World. Which ſoever it be, we cannot wonder if ſuch Men be full of diſturbing Fears and Horrors.

2. They looſe all the Bonds of Duty, and undermine the very Foundation of Morality. If there be no Law-giver, there can be no Law; if no God, no Reward to be expected for a Virtuous Life, no Puniſhment for Wickedneſs but in this Life, and conſequently, no Obligation to Virtue but from Human Laws.

And therefore we find moſt of thoſe Writers ſpeak out, and like themſelves in this Point, and plainly own no other Foundation of Virtue and Morality, but what comes from Human Laws, which (they ſay) are grounded only upon Compact.

So that (with them) the Keeping of our Contracts is the Original Law of Nature, and the very Foundation of all Morality. Tho' it will be very hard to ſhew there lies any real Obligation upon Men to that, without ſuppoſing a God, further than the Fear of Human Laws and Puniſhments.

'Tis true, ſome late Writers have advanced the *Point of Honour*, as a Foundation of Virtue; and it muſt be confeſs'd, it is a generous thing to obſerve the Rules of Virtue and Religion.

But 'tis to be conſider'd, That this very Notion of Honour implies there is ſome real Excellency in Virtue; and that there is originally and from the Nature of the Thing, a real Difference between Virtue and Vice, Moral Good and Evil, or at leaſt that the Generality of the World think ſo.

For Honour is *in honorante*, not *in honorato*; and is nothing but the Opinion that other Men have of our Dignity and Excellency. So that when a Man is virtuous upon a Point of Honour, he is ſo becauſe he values the Opinion the Generality of the World have of Virtue; and becauſe if he ſhould be otherwiſe, he would ſuffer in their Judgment of him.

Which (as I ſaid before) implies at leaſt, That the Generality of the World think that Virtue is a truly Good, Noble, and Generous Thing.

But

But if theſe Gentlemen will have the *Point of Honour* to be ſomething within them, and to have little or no reſpect to the Opinion of other Men; then Honour muſt be nothing but a Noble Scorn to do an ill, a baſe, and ungenerous thing; and ſo it muſt proceed from that which they would pretend to deny, a Senſe they have of a real Difference there is between Moral Good and Evil.

But alas, how weak a Principle of Virtue and Morality this Point of Honour is, we ſee by daily Experience; when the Generality of the World are below the Senſe of it, and the Great Men of the World too often act as if they thought themſelves as much above the Senſe of true Honour, in the juſt Extent of it; and only place it in ſome nice Punctilio's, that have nothing either of true Honour or Diſhonour in 'em, or (it may be) ſometimes in ſome Things that are truly diſhonourable.

So that the Atheiſt can have no real Principle to act upon but Self-love. Others, whoſe Principles are good, their Lives may be bad; but it is very hard

hard to ſuppoſe but the Atheiſt muſt be a Bad Man.

3. We may add further, this Opinion is of moſt pernicious Conſequence to Society, to the Publick, and to Government.

'Tis true, theſe Gentlemen ſeem to paſs a great Complement upon Princes, and to pay a great Deference to Human Laws and to Government: But as their Principles encourage Princes to oppreſs their Subjects, ſo they ſet Subjects at liberty to diſturb their Governors.

For if Power and Right be the ſame thing, then the meaneſt Subject (if he can get into the Throne, and find Abettors to ſupport and keep him there,) has as good a Right, according to theſe Men, as can be had in this Caſe; and what he has done to his Lawful Prince, another may do to him, and ſo on without end.

It would ſhock a Man to think what a World this would be, ſhould this Belief generally prevail. This would ſet Men at liberty to give the full Swing to their corrupt Inclinations; the Ambitious, to be Diſturbers of the Peace of their Country; the

Luſt-

Luſtful, to be Corrupters; the Covetous, to become Cheats, and Perfidious, and Oppreſſors; the Proud and Paſſionate, upon every little Affront and Provocation, to reek their Spleen, and to give the full Swing to their Revengeful Reſentments: But above all, the Envious and Malicious, to do hurt to their Neighbour, even when they do no good to themſelves, and to do Miſchief for Miſchief ſake. And all this they might do upon Principle, and when they had done, defend too.

Theſe and the like things have been often better repreſented to theſe Men by many Learned Perſons, than I can pretend to do: But 'tis to be feared, they are deaf to good Advice, they are too wiſe to be inſtructed, or too proud to be reproved.

Whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, we ought to bear our Teſtimony for God and Religion.

If they be really plunged into the Gulph of Atheiſm, God Almighty recover 'em, that they may own him their Maker, before they find him their Judge.

If

If in any of 'em it be Pride and Singularity that is the bottom of their pretended Atheiſm; a little Conſideration would convince 'em what an heinous thing it muſt be, to raiſe themſelves a Reputation at the Expence of God and Religion; and how extremely fooliſh it is, for the vain Opinion or Praiſe of a few Looſe Men, to affront the Judgment of all the Sober part of Mankind.

But there may be ſome honeſt People that may have ſome Doubts, and be ſometimes under ſome Difficulties as to thoſe things. Tho Arguments and Advice may in a great meaſure be loſt upon ſuch Men as I have mentioned before; yet there may be ſome that may have ſome Inclinations to Scepticiſm, that yet may be willing to hear Arguments on one Side, as well as on the other. And to ſuch as theſe, before I part with this Subject, I would give a ſhort Advice.

1. That they would ſeriouſly and impartially conſider the Arguments for the Being of a God.

And particularly, that they would accuſtom themſelves to the ſerious Contemplation of the Works of God.

The

The *Pſalmiſt* tells us, *The Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament ſheweth his Handy-work.*

Indeed we have the moſt prevailing Arguments before our Eyes, to convince us of the Being of God, tho we ſhould never look into Books for 'em. He that ſhall ſeriouſly think of the vaſt Variety, the exact Harmony, the excellent Contrivance, the mutual Subſerviency, the certain and regular Motions of the ſeveral Parts of the World, will ſee ſuch plain Footſteps of Infinite Power and Wiſdom, as will almoſt force him to the Acknowledgment of a God.

2. That they would not look upon every little Difficulty that may be ſtarted by Atheiſtical People, as ſufficient to balance the clear Evidence there is for this Truth, That there is a God.

If we ſhould act at ſuch a rate in other things, it would ſoon lead us to a general Scepticiſm; and we ſhould ſoon find we muſt believe nothing in the World. If we muſt not believe our Eyes, becauſe we cannot tell how we ſee; nor our Ears, becauſe we know not how we hear; nor that we think,

think, or underſtand any thing; becauſe we are not fully acquainted with the Manner how we do it, nor can give a clear Solution of all the Difficulties that may be ſtarted by a ſubtile Diſputant about theſe Things; the Conſequence would be, That we muſt deny there is any ſuch thing as Certainty, Senſe, and Underſtanding.

So it is in the Caſe before us.

'Tis one thing, clearly to know That God is; and another, to know What he is. We may have a full Aſſurance of his Exiſtence, tho we may be in the dark in many things as to his Eſſence.

Nay, I will ſay farther; Tho we ſhould not be able to give a clear Solution of all thoſe Difficulties that may be ſtarted as to the Exiſtence of God, from ſome of his Attributes; yet neither would this be of any weight againſt ſuch plain Evidence as we have for the Being of a God.

For this may proceed only from our Ignorance, from that imperfect Knowledge we have of God in this preſent ſtate. And this will appear the more reaſonable, if we conſider,

1. That

1. That the Atheiſt himſelf pretends to nothing like Demonſtration in this Caſe. The utmoſt he pretends to, is, That the Arguments for the Being of a God are not concluſive; that there are Objections againſt the Being of a God, that cannot be clearly anſwer'd, and Difficulties that are not eaſily ſolv'd; and pretends to give ſome Account how the World might be without a God: He does not ſo much as pretend to any thing of Certainty in the Caſe.

2. We ought to conſider, the Accounts the Atheiſts give of the Exiſtence of the World without a God, are not only attended with ſome Difficulties that they cannot give a clear Solution of, but ſuch Abſurdities, Impoſſibilities, and Contradictions, as ſtare in the Face of Reaſon, and ſeem to argue a great deal of Partiality in thoſe that propoſe 'em, and a mighty Willingneſs, Propenſity, and a ſtrong Inclination to believe there is no God.

This has before been ſhewn in part, and might be much more largely, of all the ſeveral Atheiſtical Hypotheſes, of

of the Exiſtence of the World without a God.

But that which moſt effectually ſhews the Abſurdity of theſe Mens Reaſonings, is, That they are forced to allow that to dull and ſtupid Matter, the moſt imperfect of all Beings, that yet they deny to God.

Thus they object againſt Eternity and Infinity in God, and yet are forced to allow it to Matter: For if there were not an Eternal God, there muſt be Eternal Matter; and 'tis certain there may as well be Infinite Matter without God, as any at all.

They will not allow a Spirit to have Underſtanding, becauſe it has no Fleſh, Blood, and Brains; and yet are forced to recur to this as their laſt ſhift, That Matter as Matter, has Thought and Underſtanding; and that Cogitation is as eſſential a Property of Matter or Subſtance as Extenſion: And ſome others that are not ſo bold as to aſſert this, yet profeſs they do not know but it may be ſo.

They ſtart a great many Difficulties about the World's being made by a Being of Infinite Power; but they can eaſily believe the World might make

it

it ſelf, and be improved by a fortuitous Jumblement of Atoms, into that Glorious and Regular Frame we now ſee it in, with the Addition too of thoſe Noble Intelligent Beings, that (to all appearance) have Powers above the Capacity of mere Matter.

They will not allow, that a Spirit can be a Principle of Motion to any Matter: But they muſt allow upon their own *Hypotheſis*, either, That Motion is natural to all Matter, (and then there could be no Reſt, and conſequently no Production of any thing;) or, if Reſt be natural to Matter, ſome Matter that was at Reſt muſt firſt move it ſelf: Both which Suppoſitions are abſurd enough.

Sure, thoſe who advance ſo many Abſurdities themſelves, and give Accounts of their Opinions, liable to inſuperable Objections, ought not to reject ſuch plain and demonſtrative Evidence for the Being of a God, upon every little Objection that through our imperfect Underſtanding of the Nature of that God whoſe Exiſtence we aſſert, we cannot ſo clearly account for.

3. I would adviſe ſuch Perſons as I am now ſpeaking to, that they would have a ſpecial Care of Pride.

As this has in the Church been the Root of Hereſies, ſo (no doubt) of Infidelity too.

We may obſerve, there is a ſtrange Itch in ſome of the more Philoſophical and Studious Part of Mankind, to make themſelves a Name by advancing ſomething ſtrange and new: And when they cannot do any thing extraordinary in the common way, they think to make themſelves conſiderable by their being ſingular, by advancing and defending Notions that lie croſs to the Senſe of Mankind.

And if once they catch this Diſeaſe, the more abſurd their Notions, and the more extravagant their Aſſertions are, the more famous they think they make themſelves.

And as ſome drudge on in the old beaten Road of Philoſophy, without the leaſt Freedom of Thought; ſo ſome others, under the Pretence and Character of Free Thinkers, care not what they ſay, ſo it be far enough from the received and vulgar Notions of the World.

And as it is with ſome Superſtitious Religioniſts, the leſs they have to ſay for themſelves, the more proud, and conceited, and confident they are, and the more they deſpiſe other People: So it is generally with theſe Philoſophical Infidels; the more abſurd their Notions, the more precarious their Aſſertions, the more weak their Reaſonings; with the greater Pride and Confidence do they vend their wild Notions as New Diſcoveries, and talk with ſuch a contemptuous Air, as if all Mankind had been led blindfold, till they were born to enlighten the World.

Plato gives this Account of the Atheiſts of his Time. *Diagoras* and *Theodorus* are ſaid to have profeſs'd Atheiſm, becauſe they would have the Glory of being the Authors of ſome New Opinion. And he that reads *Vaninus*, *Machiavel*, *Hobbs*, *Spinoſa*, *Blount*, and ſuch others of our modern Atheiſts; will find ſuch a Vein of Pride and Vanity, and Contempt of others runs through their Writings; that tho he will eaſily ſee they have advanced little, but what they are beholden for to the Ancient Atheiſtical Writers, yet

they have clearly out-done 'em in that great Virtue of pretended Adepts in Philoſophy, a good Conceit of themſelves.

But above all, let them take care that while they believe a God, they do not live as if there was none.

As Practical Atheiſm is very abſurd in it ſelf, ſo it is eſpecially in Men of Senſe, Thought, and Reading, ſtrangely preparative for Speculative Atheiſm.

'Tis true, thoſe Men that are ſo buſied about the World, that they never think at all, may go on in their Luſts without remorſe: But for thoſe whoſe Employments (or Curioſity) engages them to read and think of theſe Things, if they live vicious Lives, 'tis hard to think but they muſt in a little time alter their Belief or Practice; and if the Power of their Luſts be ſo predominant, that they will continue to live as if there were no God; they may likely in a while endeavour to perſwade themſelves that there is none.

The Apoſtle to the *Romans* ſays of the Heathen, That becauſe *when they knew God, they glorify'd him not as God*, God

God ſuffer'd them to become *vain in their imagination*: This he may do, by ſuffering Men to fall into Atheiſm as well as Polytheiſm; or the Belief of no God, as well as that of many Gods.

In fine, let us who pretend firmly to believe in God, that he is the Maker and Governor of us and all the World, live under a conſtant Senſe of our Duty and Obligations to him. Let not us, while we profeſs to know God, in Works deny him. Let not us give that Scandal to the Infidel Part of the World, as to give 'em occaſion to ſay, That while we pretend to believe better, we live worſe than they.

To this end, let us well conſider and apply what we believe concerning this God.

That he is in himſelf a Self-exiſtent, Immutable, Eternal, Omnipotent, Omnipreſent, infinitely Wiſe, and abſolutely Perfect Spirit. That he is the Great Creator, Preſerver, and Governor of us and all the World. That he is a Juſt, and Holy, and yet a Good and Merciful God.

That

That from the Conſideration of theſe and the like Glorious Attributes of God, there muſt needs iſſue an Obligation upon thoſe Creatures that are capable of knowing God, and thoſe Perfections that are Eſſential to the Divine Nature, to the Exerciſe of all ſuitable inward Affections towards this God, and giving all decent external Demonſtrations of the ſame.

Let us therefore conſtantly live under an awful Senſe of his Majeſty and Preſence. Let us repoſe an entire Confidence in his Powerful Providence. Let us have an ardent Love to him, as one that is indeed the Higheſt Object of our Love, infinitely Good in himſelf, and Bountiful to us. Let us yield a full Submiſſion to his Pleaſure, under all his Providential Diſpenſations; as knowing it is fit he ſhould do what he pleaſes, and is Wiſe and Good, and will do what is beſt for us.

But particularly, let us Chriſtians who live under the Goſpel-Diſpenſation, and believe we have the clear Revelations of his Word and Will, exerciſe a firm Faith in his Word, yield a full

full Obedience to his Revealed Will, hope in his Mercy, give him that Spiritual Worship that by his Word appears to be suitable to his Nature, and agreeable to his Will; and do our best to testify our Gratitude for his Mercies, and to answer the End of Christ's Coming, and walk in all Things worthy of that Religion we profess; according to that Pathetical Exhortation of the Apostle, *Phil.* 1. 27. *Only let your Conversation be as it becometh the Gospel of Christ.*

FINIS.

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